



COMPACT

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MICHAEL
MOORCOCK

BEHOLD, THE MAN

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WHY SO CONSERVATIVE?



TRADITIONALLY, SCIENCE FICTION has always been, in certain areas, a somewhat conservative medium. When Philip José Farmer's *The Lovers* was first published in the early fifties it was heralded as a startling breakthrough because it attempted to deal realistically with a sexual relationship between a man from Earth and an alien girl. A fairly mediocre story, it broke no new ground in literature—only in the conventions of the sf magazines of the day—and did nothing much more spectacular for the cause of realism than Emile Zola had done seventy years earlier (or Defoe had done two hundred years earlier). Another story that was thought, much more recently, to be too strong for the American sf magazines was Harry Harrison's *The Streets of Ashkelon*, which eventually found a home in NEW WORLDS about four years ago. An excellent story with a good twist ending, *The Streets of Ashkelon* was also regarded as a breakthrough, but its attack on Christianity was nothing like as passionate as the attacks of the Victorian free-thinkers and their literary descendants of the early twentieth century (indeed, it's open to doubt that the story was an attack on Christianity—the French Catholic Press approved of it when it appeared in translation!). Langdon Jones's *I Remember, Anita* was an even more recent example of a story still regarded as a controversial breakthrough in sf.

Why should science fiction have been for so long a restricted medium, self-censoring, never dealing realistically with certain important aspects of our lives? Long after Lawrence and Joyce had been accepted, the editors of the sf magazines felt that anything but hints about sex were too strong for their readers, that any story likely to offend

a certain section of the public could not be published, no matter what its merits were, and so on.

The biggest part of the answer lies in the fact that the bulk of sf we know today was published by periodicals originally founded in the general tradition of pulp magazines. Their small, commercial publishers had no literary standards and did not expect their editors to have any (or their writers, for that matter). They were used to finding the lowest common denominator in the fiction they published so that it could sell to the largest potential audience. Therefore violence was acceptable (as it was in Victorian times), crude sexual imagery (guns, knives, spaceships, etc.) was acceptable, sensual pictures were acceptable (so long as the sexual organs were well covered and that the picture had virtually nothing to do with the story), neurotic sex appeal was acceptable (leather-clad, dominating women with or without whips appear in some of the best sf of its time), any amount of romantic or violent melodrama was acceptable, but realistic descriptions of sexual relationships were taboo. So were stories that were likely to offend sections of the public in other ways (and their subjects were frequently unconsciously related with sex, as religion often is). It is also interesting to note that at least two prominent U.S. sf editors suffered or suffer (a) from agorophobia and (b) from an obsessive interest in restriction symbols.

There is much on the credit side, too, of course. Certainly in magazines like Gold's *GALAXY* and Boucher's *F & SF* in the States, political and social satire flourished in a climate where everyone else was being super-cautious (this was at the time of McCarthy, remember?) and at that time was about the only popular fiction that chose to attack accepted standards rather than support them to the hilt (though we've yet to read an American sf story written explicitly in support of modern Communism). At the time of *The Space Merchants* and *The Stars My Destination*, sf was the best popular reading available, almost without question. But the literary climate and the social climate have changed. Things are better. Sf is not alone. The sf magazines are not alone. Magazines like *PRIVATE EYE* and *THE REALIST* (with similar circulation figures to those of

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behold
the man
michael moorcock

HE HAS NO material power as the god-emperors had ; he has only a following of desert people and fishermen. They tell him he is a god ; he believes them. The followers of Alexander said: "He is unconquerable, therefore he is a god." The followers of this man do not think at all ; he was their act of spontaneous creation. Now he leads them, this Nazarene madman called Jesus of Nazareth.

And he spoke, saying unto them: Yeah verily I was Karl Glogauer and now I am Jesus the Messiah, the Christ.

And it was so.

o n e

THE TIME MACHINE was a sphere full of milky fluid in which the traveller floated, enclosed in a rubber suit, breathing through a mask attached to a hose leading to the wall of the machine. The sphere cracked as it landed and the fluid spilled into the dust and was soaked up. Instinctively, Glogauer curled himself into a ball as the level of the liquid fell and he sank to the yielding plastic of the sphere's inner lining. The instruments, cryptographic, unconventional, were still and silent. The sphere shifted and rolled as the last of the liquid dripped from the great gash in its side.

Momentarily, Glogauer's eyes opened and closed, then his mouth stretched in a kind of yawn and his tongue fluttered and he uttered a groan that turned into a ululation.

He heard himself. The Voice of Tongues, he thought. The language of the unconscious. But he could not guess what he was saying.

His body became numb and he shivered. His passage through time had not been easy and even the thick fluid had not wholly protected him, though it had doubtless saved his life. Some ribs were certainly broken. Painfully, he straightened his arms and legs and began to crawl over the slippery plastic towards the crack in the machine. He could see harsh sunlight, a sky like shimmering steel. He pulled himself halfway through the crack, closing his eyes

as the full strength of the sunlight struck them. He lost consciousness.

Christmas term, 1949. He was nine years old, born two years after his father had reached England from Austria.

The other children were screaming with laughter in the gravel of the playground. The game had begun earnestly enough and somewhat nervously Karl had joined in in the same spirit. Now he was crying.

"Let me *down*! Please, Mervyn, stop it!"

They had tied him with his arms spreadeagled against the wire-netting of the playground fence. It bulged outwards under his weight and one of the posts threatened to come loose. Mervyn Williams, the boy who had proposed the game, began to shake the post so that Karl was swung heavily back and forth on the netting.

"Stop it!"

He saw that his cries only encouraged them and he clenched his teeth, becoming silent.

He slumped, pretending unconsciousness; the school ties they had used as bonds cut into his wrists. He heard the children's voices drop.

"Is he all right?" Molly Turner was whispering.

"He's only kidding," Williams replied uncertainly.

He felt them untying him, their fingers fumbling with the knots. Deliberately, he sagged, then fell to his knees, grazing them on the gravel, and dropped face down to the ground.

Distantly, for he was half-convinced by his own deception, he heard their worried voices.

Williams shook him.

"Wake up, Karl. Stop mucking about."

He stayed where he was, losing his sense of time until he heard Mr. Matson's voice over the general babble.

"What on earth were you doing, Williams?"

"It was a play, sir, about Jesus. Karl was being Jesus. We tied him to the fence. It was his idea, sir. It was only a game, sir."

Karl's body was stiff, but he managed to stay still, breathing shallowly.

"He's not a strong boy like you, Williams. You should have known better."

"I'm sorry, sir. I'm really sorry." Williams sounded as if he were crying.

Karl felt himself lifted ; felt the triumph. . . .

He was being carried along. His head and side were so painful that he felt sick. He had had no chance to discover where exactly the time machine had brought him, but, turning his head now, he could see by the way the man on his right was dressed that he was at least in the Middle East.

He had meant to land in the year 29 A.D. in the wilderness beyond Jerusalem, near Bethlehem. Were they taking him to Jerusalem now?

He was on a stretcher that was apparently made of animal skins ; this indicated that he was probably in the past at any rate. Two men were carrying the stretcher on their shoulders. Others walked on both sides. There was a smell of sweat and animal fat and a musty smell he could not identify. They were walking towards a line of hills in the distance.

He winced as the stretcher lurched and the pain in his side increased. For the second time he passed out.

He woke up briefly, hearing voices. They were speaking what was evidently some form of Aramaic. It was night, perhaps, for it seemed very dark. They were no longer moving. There was straw beneath him. He was relieved. He slept.

In those days came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of, the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins ; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the

region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

(Matthew 3: 1-6)

They were washing him. He felt the cold water running over his naked body. They had managed to strip off his protective suit. There were now thick layers of cloth against his ribs on the right, and bands of leather bound them to him.

He felt very weak now, and hot, but there was less pain.

He was in a building—or perhaps a cave, it was too gloomy to tell—lying on a heap of straw that was saturated by the water. Above him, two men continued to sluice water down on him from their earthenware pots. They were stern-faced, heavily-bearded men, in cotton robes.

He wondered if he could form a sentence they might understand. His knowledge of written Aramaic was good, but he was not sure of certain pronunciations.

He cleared his throat. "Where—be—this—place?"

They frowned, shaking their heads and lowering their water jars.

"I—seek—a—Nazarene—Jesus. . . ."

"Nazarene. Jesus." One of the men repeated the words, but they did not seem to mean anything to him. He shrugged.

The other, however, only repeated the word Nazarene, speaking it slowly as if it had some special significance for him. He muttered a few words to the other man and went towards the entrance of the room.

Karl Glogauer continued to try to say something the remaining man would understand.

"What — year — doth — the Roman Emperor — sit — in Rome?"

It was a confusing question to ask, he realised. He knew Christ had been crucified in the fifteenth year of Tiberius's reign, and that was why he had asked the question. He tried to phrase it better.

"How many—year—doth Tiberius rule?"

"Tiberius?" The man frowned.

Glogauer's ear was adjusting to the accent now and he

tried to simulate it better. "Tiberius. The emperor of the Romans. How many years has he ruled?"

"How many?" The man shook his head. "I know not."

At least Glogauer had managed to make himself understood.

"Where is this place?" he asked.

"It is the wilderness beyond Machaerus," the man replied. "Know you not that?"

Machaerus lay to the south-east of Jerusalem, on the other side of the Dead Sea. There was no doubt that he was in the past and that the period was some time in the reign of Tiberius, for the man had recognised the name easily enough.

His companion was now returning, bringing with him a huge fellow with heavily muscled hairy arms and a great barrel chest. He carried a big staff in one hand. He was dressed in animal skins and was well over six feet tall. His black, curly hair was long and he had a black, bushy beard that covered the upper half of his chest. He moved like an animal and his large, piercing brown eyes looked reflectively at Glogauer.

When he spoke, it was in a deep voice, but too rapidly for Glogauer to follow. It was Glogauer's turn to shake his head.

The big man squatted down beside him. "Who art thou?"

Glogauer paused. He had not planned to be found in this way. He had intended to disguise himself as a traveller from Syria, hoping that the local accents would be different enough to explain his own unfamiliarity with the language. He decided that it was best to stick to this story and hope for the best.

"I am from the north," he said.

"Not from Egypt?" the big man asked. It was as if he had expected Glogauer to be from there. Glogauer decided that if this was what the big man thought, he might just as well agree to it.

"I came out of Egypt two years since," he said.

The big man nodded, apparently satisfied. "So you are a magus from Egypt. That is what we thought. And your name is Jesus, and you are the Nazarene."

"I seek Jesus, the Nazarene," Glogauer said.

"Then what is your name?" The man seemed disappointed.

Glogauer could not give his own name. It would sound too strange to them. On impulse, he gave his father's first name. "Emmanuel," he said.

The man nodded, again satisfied. "Emmanuel."

Glogauer realised belatedly that the choice of name had been an unfortunate one in the circumstances, for Emmanuel meant in Hebrew 'God with us' and doubtless had a mystic significance for his questioner.

"And what is your name?" he asked.

The man straightened up, looking broodingly down on Glogauer. "You do not know me? You have not heard of John, called the Baptist?"

Glogauer tried to hide his surprise, but evidently John the Baptist saw that his name was familiar. He nodded his shaggy head. "You do know of me, I see. Well, magus, now I must decide, eh?"

"What must you decide?" Glogauer asked nervously.

"If you be the friend of the prophecies or the false one we have been warned against by Adonai. The Romans would deliver me into the hands of mine enemies, the children of Herod."

"Why is that?"

"You must know why, for I speak against the Romans who enslave Judaea, and I speak against the unlawful things that Herod does, and I prophesy the time when all those who are not righteous shall be destroyed and Adonai's kingdom will be restored on Earth as the old prophets said it would be. I say to the people 'Be ready for that day when ye shall take up the sword to do Adonai's will'. The unrighteous know that they will perish on this day, and they would destroy me."

Despite the intensity of his words, John's tone was matter of fact. There was no hint of insanity or fanaticism in his face or bearing. He sounded most of all like an Anglican vicar reading a sermon whose meaning for him had lost its edge.

The essence of what he said, Karl Glogauer realised, was that he was arousing the people to throw out the

Romans and their puppet Herod and establish a more 'righteous' regime. The attributing of this plan to 'Adonai' (one of the spoken names of Jahweh and meaning The Lord) seemed, as many scholars had guessed in the 20th century, a means of giving the plan extra weight. In a world where politics and religion, even in the west, were inextricably bound together, it was necessary to ascribe a supernatural origin to the plan.

Indeed, Glogauer thought, it was more than likely that John believed his idea had been inspired by God, for the Greeks on the other side of the Mediterranean had not yet stopped arguing about the origins of inspiration—whether it originated in a man's head or was placed there by the gods. That John accepted him as an Egyptian magician of some kind did not surprise Glogauer particularly, either. The circumstances of his arrival must have seemed extraordinarily miraculous and at the same time acceptable, particularly to a sect like the Essenes who practised self-mortification and starvation and must be quite used to seeing visions in this hot wilderness. There was no doubt now that these people were the neurotic Essenes, whose ritual washing—baptism—and self-deprivation, coupled with the almost paranoid mysticism that led them to invent secret languages and the like, was a sure indication of their mentally unbalanced condition. All this occurred to Glogauer, the psychiatrist manqué, but Glogauer the man was torn between the poles of extreme rationalism and the desire to be convinced by the mysticism itself.

"I must meditate," John said, turning towards the cave entrance. "I must pray. You will remain here until guidance is sent to me."

He left the cave, striding rapidly away.

Glogauer sank back on the wet straw. He was without doubt in a limestone cave, and the atmosphere in the cave was surprisingly humid. It must be very hot outside. He felt drowsy.

t w o

FIVE YEARS in the past. Nearly two thousand in the future. Lying in the hot, sweaty bed with Monica. Once again,

another attempt to make normal love had metamorphosed into the performance of minor aberrations which seemed to satisfy her better than anything else.

Their real courtship and fulfilment was yet to come. As usual, it would be verbal. As usual it would find its climax in argumentative anger.

"I suppose you're going to tell me you're not satisfied again." She accepted the lighted cigarette he handed to her in the darkness.

"I'm all right," he said.

There was silence for a while as they smoked.

Eventually, and in spite of knowing what the result would be if he did so, he found himself talking.

"It's ironic, isn't it?" he began.

He waited for her reply. She would delay for a little while yet.

"What is?" she said at last.

"All this. You spend all day trying to help sexual neurotics to become normal. You spend your nights doing what they do."

"Not to the same extent. You know it's all a matter of degree."

"So you say."

He turned his head and looked at her face in the starlight from the window. She was a gaunt-featured redhead, with the calm, professional seducer's voice of the psychiatric social worker that she was. It was a voice that was soft, reasonable and insincere. Only occasionally, when she became particularly agitated, did her voice begin to indicate her real character. Her features never seemed to be in repose, even when she slept. Her eyes were forever wary, her movements rarely spontaneous. Every inch of her was protected, which was probably why she got so little pleasure from ordinary lovemaking.

"You just can't let yourself go, can you?" he said.

"Oh, shut up, Karl. Have a look at yourself if you're looking for a neurotic mess."

Both were amateur psychiatrists—she a psychiatric social worker, he merely a reader, a dabbler, though he had done a year's study some time ago when he had planned to become a psychiatrist. They used the terminology of

psychiatry freely. They felt happier if they could name something.

He rolled away from her, groping for the ashtray on the bedside table, catching a glance of himself in the dressing table mirror. He was a sallow, intense, moody Jewish bookseller, with a head full of images and unresolved obsessions, a body full of emotions. He always lost these arguments with Monica. Verbally, she was the dominant one. This kind of exchange often seemed to him more perverse than their love-making, where usually at least his role was masculine. Essentially, he realised, he was passive, masochistic, indecisive. Even his anger, which came frequently, was impotent. Monica was ten years older than he was, ten years more bitter. As an individual, of course, she had far more dynamism than he had; but as a psychiatric social worker she had had just as many failures. She plugged on, becoming increasingly cynical on the surface but still, perhaps, hoping for a few spectacular successes with patients. They tried to do too much, that was the trouble, he thought. The priests in the confessional supplied a panacea; the psychiatrists tried to cure, and most of the time they failed. But at least they tried, he thought, and then wondered if that was, after all, a virtue.

"I did look at myself," he said.

Was she sleeping? He turned. Her wary eyes were still open, looking out of the window.

"I did look at myself," he repeated. "The way Jung did. 'How can I help these persons if I am myself a fugitive and perhaps also suffer from the *morbus sacer* of a neurosis?' That's what Jung asked himself. . . ."

"That old sensationalist. That old rationaliser of his own mysticism. No wonder you never became a psychiatrist."

"I wouldn't have been any good. It was nothing to do with Jung. . . ."

"Don't take it out on me. . . ."

"You've told me yourself that you feel the same—you think it's useless. . . ."

"After a hard week's work, I might say that. Give me another fag."

He opened the packet on the bedside table and put two

cigarettes in his mouth, lighting them and handing one to her.

Almost abstractedly, he noticed that the tension was increasing. The argument was, as ever, pointless. But it was not the argument that was the important thing; it was simply the expression of their essential relationship. He wondered if that were in any way important, either.

"You're not telling the truth." He realised that there was no stopping now that the ritual was in full swing.

"I'm telling the practical truth. I've no compulsion to give up my work. I've no wish to be a failure. . . ."

"Failure? You're more melodramatic than I am."

"You're too earnest, Karl. You want to get out of yourself a bit."

He sneered. "If I were you, I'd give up my work, Monica. You're no more suited for it than I was."

She shrugged. "You're a petty bastard."

"I'm not jealous of you, if that's what you think. You'll never understand what I'm looking for."

Her laugh was artificial, brittle. "Modern man in search of a soul, eh? Modern man in search of a crutch, I'd say. And you can take that any way you like."

"We're destroying the myths that make the world go round."

"Now you say 'And what are we putting in their place?' You're stale and stupid, Karl. You've never looked rationally at anything—including yourself."

"What of it. You say the myth is unimportant."

"The reality that creates it is important."

"Jung knew that the myth can also create the reality."

"Which shows what a muddled old fool he was."

He stretched his legs. In doing so, he touched hers and he recoiled. He scratched his head. She still lay there smoking, but she was smiling now.

"Come on," she said. "Let's have some stuff about Christ."

He said nothing. She handed him the stub of her cigarette and he put it in the ashtray. He looked at his watch. It was two o'clock in the morning.

"Why do we do it?" he said.

"Because we must." She put her hand to the back of his

head and pulled it towards her breast. "What else can we do?"

We Protestants must sooner or later face this question: Are we to understand the 'imitation of Christ' in the sense that we should copy his life and, if I may use the expression, ape his stigmata ; or in the deeper sense that we are to live our own proper lives as truly as he lived his in all its implications? It is no easy matter to live a life that is modelled on Christ's, but it is unspeakably harder to live one's own life as truly as Christ lived his. Anyone who did this would . . . be misjudged, derided, tortured and crucified. . . . A neurosis is a dissociation of personality.

(Jung: Modern Man in Search of a Soul)

For a month, John the Baptist was away and Glogauer lived with the Essenes, finding it surprisingly easy, as his ribs mended, to join in their daily life. The Essenes' township consisted of a mixture of single-storey houses, built of limestone and clay brick, and the caves that were to be found on both sides of the shallow valley. The Essenes shared their goods in common and this particular sect had wives, though many Essenes led completely monastic lives. The Essenes were also pacifists, refusing to own or to make weapons—yet this sect plainly tolerated the warlike Baptist. Perhaps their hatred of the Romans overcame their principles. Perhaps they were not sure of John's entire intention. Whatever the reason for their toleration, there was little doubt that John the Baptist was virtually their leader.

The life of the Essenes consisted of ritual bathing three times a day, of prayer and of work. The work was not difficult. Sometimes Glogauer guided a plough pulled by two other members of the sect, sometimes he looked after the goats that were allowed to graze on the hillsides. It was a peaceful, ordered life, and even the unhealthy aspects were so much a matter of routine that Glogauer hardly noticed them for anything else after a while.

Tending the goats, he would lie on a hill-top, looking out over the wilderness which was not a desert, but rocky scrubland sufficient to feed animals like goats or sheep. The scrubland was broken by low-lying bushes and a few small trees growing along the banks of the river that doubt-

less ran into the Dead Sea. It was uneven ground. In outline, it had the appearance of a stormy lake, frozen and turned yellow and brown. Beyond the Dead Sea lay Jerusalem. Obviously Christ had not entered the city for the last time yet. John the Baptist would have to die before that happened.

The Essenes' way of life was comfortable enough, for all its simplicity. They had given him a goatskin loin-cloth and a staff and, except for the fact that he was watched by day and night, he appeared to be accepted as a kind of lay member of the sect.

Sometimes they questioned him casually about his chariot—the time machine they intended soon to bring in from the desert—and he told them that it had borne him from Egypt to Syria and then to here. They accepted the miracle calmly. As he had suspected, they were used to miracles.

The Essenes had seen stranger things than his time machine. They had seen men walk on water and angels descend to and from heaven; they had heard the voice of God and His archangels as well as the tempting voice of Satan and his minions. They wrote all these things down in their vellum scrolls. They were merely a record of the supernatural as their other scrolls were records of their daily lives and of the news that travelling members of their sect brought to them.

They lived constantly in the presence of God and spoke to God and were answered by God when they had sufficiently mortified their flesh and starved themselves and chanted their prayers beneath the blazing sun of Judaea.

Karl Glogauer grew his hair long and let his beard come unchecked. He mortified his flesh and starved himself and chanted his prayers beneath the sun, as they did. But he rarely heard God and only once thought he saw an archangel with wings of fire.

In spite of his willingness to experience the Essenes' hallucinations, Glogauer was disappointed, but he was surprised that he felt so well considering all the self-inflicted hardships he had to undergo, and he also felt relaxed in the company of these men and women who were undoubtedly insane. Perhaps it was because their insanity was not

so very different from his own that after a while he stopped wondering about it.

John the Baptist returned one evening, striding over the hills followed by twenty or so of his closest disciples. Glogauer saw him as he prepared to drive the goats into their cave for the night. He waited for John to get closer.

The Baptist's face was grim, but his expression softened as he saw Glogauer. He smiled and grasped him by the upper arm in the Roman fashion.

"Well, Emmanuel, you are our friend, as I thought you were. Sent by Adonai to help us accomplish His will. You shall baptise me on the morrow, to show all the people that He is with us."

Glogauer was tired. He had eaten very little and had spent most of the day in the sun, tending the goats. He yawned, finding it hard to reply. However, he was relieved. John had plainly been in Jerusalem trying to discover if the Romans had sent him as a spy. John now seemed reassured and trusted him.

He was worried, however, by the Baptist's faith in his powers.

"John," he began. "I'm no seer. . . ."

The Baptist's face clouded for a moment, then he laughed awkwardly. "Say nothing. Eat with me tonight. I have wild-honey and locusts."

Glogauer had not yet eaten this food, which was the staple of travellers who did not carry provisions but lived off the food they could find on the journey. Some regarded it as a delicacy.

He tried it later, as he sat in John's house. There were only two rooms in the house. One was for eating in, the other for sleeping in. The honey and locusts was too sweet for his taste, but it was a welcome change from barley or goat-meat.

He sat cross-legged, opposite John the Baptist who ate with relish. Night had fallen. From outside came low murmurs and the moans and cries of those at prayer.

Glogauer dipped another locust into the bowl of honey that rested between them. "Do you plan to lead the people of Judaea in revolt against the Romans?" he asked.

The Baptist seemed disturbed by the direct question. It was the first of its nature that Glogauer had put to him.

"If it be Adonai's will," he said, not looking up as he leant towards the bowl of honey.

"The Romans know this?"

"I do not know, Emmanuel, but Herod the incestuous has doubtless told them I speak against the unrighteous."

"Yet the Romans do not arrest you."

"Pilate dare not—not since the petition was sent to the Emperor Tiberius."

"Petition?"

"Aye, the one that Herod and the Pharisees signed when Pilate the procurator did place votive shields in the palace at Jerusalem and seek to violate the Temple. Tiberius rebuked Pilate and since then, though he still hates the Jews, the procurator is more careful in his treatment of us."

"Tell me, John, do you know how long Tiberius has ruled in Rome?" He had not had the chance to ask that question again until now.

"Fourteen years."

It was 28 A.D.; something less than a year before the crucifixion would take place, and his time machine was smashed.

Now John the Baptist planned armed rebellion against the occupying Romans, but, if the Gospels were to be believed, would soon be decapitated by Herod. Certainly no large-scale rebellion had taken place at this time. Even those who claimed that the entry of Jesus and his disciples into Jerusalem and the invasion of the Temple were plainly the actions of armed rebels had found no records to suggest that John had led a similar revolt.

Glogauer had come to like the Baptist very much. The man was plainly a hardened revolutionary who had been planning revolt against the Romans for years and had slowly been building up enough followers to make the attempt successful. He reminded Glogauer strongly of the resistance leaders of the second world war. He had a

similar toughness and understanding of the realities of his position. He knew that he would only have one chance to smash the cohorts garrisoned in the country. If the revolt became protracted, Rome would have ample time to send more troops to Jerusalem.

"When do you think Adonai intends to destroy the unrighteous through your agency?" Glogauer said tactfully.

John glanced at him with some amusement. He smiled. "The Passover is a time when the people are restless and resent the strangers most," he said.

"When is the next Passover?"

"Not for many months."

"How can I help you?"

"You are a magus."

"I can work no miracles."

John wiped the honey from his beard. "I cannot believe that, Emmanuel. The manner of your coming was miraculous. The Essenes did not know if you were a devil or a messenger from Adonai."

"I am neither."

"Why do you confuse me, Emmanuel? I know that you are Adonai's messenger. You are the sign that the Essenes sought. The time is almost ready. The kingdom of heaven shall soon be established on earth. Come with me. Tell the people that you speak with Adonai's voice. Work mighty miracles."

"Your power is waning, is that it?" Glogauer looked sharply at John. "You need me to renew your rebels' hopes?"

"You speak like a Roman, with such lack of subtlety." John got up angrily. Evidently, like the Essenes he lived with, he preferred less direct conversation. There was a practical reason for this, Glogauer realised, in that John and his men feared betrayal all the time. Even the Essenes' records were partially written in cypher, with one innocent-seeming word or phrase meaning something else entirely.

"I am sorry, John. But tell me if I am right." Glogauer spoke softly.

"Are you not a magus, coming in that chariot from nowhere?" The Baptist waved his hands and shrugged his shoulders. "My men saw you! They saw the shining thing

take shape in air, crack and let you enter out of it. Is that not magical? The clothing you wore—was that earthly raiment? The talismans within the chariot—did they not speak of powerful magic? The prophet said that a magus would come from Egypt and be called Emmanuel. So it is written in the Book of Micah! Are none of these things true?"

"Most of them. But there are explanations—" he broke off, unable to think of the nearest word to 'rational'. "I am an ordinary man, like you. I have no power to work miracles! I am just a man!"

John glowered. "You mean you refuse to help us?"

"I'm grateful to you and the Essenes. You saved my life almost certainly. If I can repay that. . . ."

John nodded his head deliberately. "You can repay it, Emmanuel."

"How?"

"Be the great magus I need. Let me present you to all those who become impatient and would turn away from Adonai's will. Let me tell them the manner of your coming to us. Then you can say that all is Adonai's will and that they must prepare to accomplish it."

John stared at him intensely.

"Will you, Emmanuel?"

"For your sake, John. And in turn, will you send men to bring my chariot here as soon as possible. I wish to see if it may be mended."

"I will."

Glogauer felt exhilarated. He began to laugh. The Baptist looked at him with slight bewilderment. Then he began to join in.

Glogauer laughed on. History would not mention it, but he, with John the Baptist, would prepare the way for Christ.

Christ was not born yet. Perhaps Glogauer knew it, one year before the crucifixion.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth. John

bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.

(John 1: 14-15)

Even when he had first met Monica they had had long arguments. His father had not then died and left him the money to buy the Occult Bookshop in Great Russell Street, opposite the British Museum. He was doing all sorts of temporary work and his spirits were very low. At that time Monica had seemed a great help, a great guide through the mental darkness engulfing him. They had both lived close to Holland Park and went there for walks almost every Sunday of the summer of 1962. At twenty-two, he was already obsessed with Jung's strange brand of Christian mysticism. She, who despised Jung, had soon begun to denigrate all his ideas. She never really convinced him, but, after a while, she had succeeded in confusing him. It would be another six months before they went to bed together.

It was uncomfortably hot.

They sat in the shade of the cafeteria, watching a distant cricket match. Nearer to them, two girls and a boy sat on the grass, drinking orange squash from plastic cups. One of the girls had a guitar across her lap and she set the cup down and began to play, singing a folksong in a high, gentle voice. Glogauer tried to listen to the words. As a student, he had always liked traditional folk music.

"Christianity is dead." Monica sipped her tea. "Religion is dying. God was killed in 1945."

"There may yet be a resurrection," he said.

"Let us hope not. Religion was the creation of fear. Knowledge destroys fear. Without fear, religion can't survive."

"You think there's no fear about these days?"

"Not the same kind, Karl."

"Haven't you ever considered the *idea* of Christ?" he

asked her, changing his tack. "What that means to Christians?"

"The idea of the tractor means as much to a Marxist," she replied.

"But what came first? The idea or the actuality of Christ?"

She shrugged. "The actuality, if it matters. Jesus was a Jewish troublemaker organising a revolt against the Romans. He was crucified for his pains. That's all we know and all we need to know."

"A great religion couldn't have begun so simply."

"When people need one, they'll make a great religion out of the most unlikely beginnings."

"That's my point, Monica." He gesticulated at her and she drew away slightly. "The *idea* preceded the *actuality* of Christ."

"Oh, Karl, don't go on. The actuality of *Jesus* preceded the idea of *Christ*."

A couple walked past, glancing at them as they argued.

Monica noticed them and fell silent. She got up and he rose as well, but she shook her head. "I'm going home, Karl. You stay here. I'll see you in a few days."

He watched her walk down the wide path towards the park gates.

The next day, when he got home from work, he found a letter. She must have written it after she had left him and posted it the same day.

Dear Karl,

Conversation doesn't seem to have much effect on you, you know. It's as if you listen to the tone of the voice, the rhythm of the words, without ever hearing what is trying to be communicated. You're a bit like a sensitive animal who can't understand what's being said to it, but can tell if the person talking is pleased or angry and so on. That's why I'm writing to you—to try to get my idea across. You respond too emotionally when we're together.

You make the mistake of considering Christianity as something that developed over the course of a few years, from the death of Jesus to the time the Gospels were written. But Christianity wasn't new. Only the name was new. Christianity was merely a stage in the meeting, cross-

fertilisation metamorphosis of Western logic and Eastern mysticism. Look how the religion itself changed over the centuries, re-interpreting itself to meet changing times. Christianity is just a new name for a conglomeration of old myths and philosophies. All the Gospels do is retell the sun myth and garble some of the ideas from the Greeks and Romans. Even in the second century, Jewish scholars were showing it up for the mish-mash it was! They pointed out the strong similarities between the various sun myths and the Christ myth. The miracles didn't happen—they were invented later, borrowed from here and there.

Remember the old Victorians who used to say that Plato was really a Christian because he anticipated Christian thought? Christian thought! Christianity was a vehicle for ideas in circulation for centuries before Christ. Was Marcus Aurelius a Christian? He was writing in the direct tradition of Western philosophy. That's why Christianity caught on in Europe and not in the East! You should have been a theologian with your bias, not a psychiatrist. The same goes for your friend Jung.

Try to clear your head of all this morbid nonsense and you'll be a lot better at your job.

Yours,

Monica.

He screwed the letter up and threw it away. Later that evening he was tempted to look at it again, but he resisted the temptation.

t h r e e

JOHN STOOD UP to his waist in the river. Most of the Essenes stood on the banks watching him. Glogauer looked down at him.

"I cannot, John. It is not for me to do it."

The Baptist muttered, "You must."

Glogauer shivered as he lowered himself into the river beside the Baptist. He felt light-headed. He stood there trembling, unable to move.

His foot slipped on the rocks of the river and John reached out and gripped his arm, steadying him.

In the clear sky, the sun was at zenith, beating down on his unprotected head.

"Emmanuel!" John cried suddenly. "The spirit of Adonai is within you!"

Glogauer still found it hard to speak. He shook his head slightly. It was aching and he could hardly see. Today he was having his first migraine attack since he had come here. He wanted to vomit. John's voice sounded distant.

He swayed in the water.

As he began to fall towards the Baptist, the whole scene around him shimmered. He felt John catch him and heard himself say desperately: "John, baptise me!" And then there was water in his mouth and throat and he was coughing.

John's voice was crying something. Whatever the words were, they drew a response from the people on both banks. The roaring in his ears increased, its quality changing. He thrashed in the water, then felt himself lifted to his feet.

The Essenes were swaying in unison, every face lifted upwards towards the glaring sun.

Glogauer began to vomit into the water, stumbling as John's hands gripped his arms painfully and guided him up the bank.

A peculiar, rhythmic humming came from the mouths of the Essenes as they swayed; it rose as they swayed to one side, fell as they swayed to the other.

Glogauer covered his ears as John released him. He was still retching, but it was dry now, and worse than before.

He began to stagger away, barely keeping his balance, running, with his ears still covered; running over the rocky scrubland; running as the sun throbbed in the sky and its heat pounded at his head; running away.

But John forbid him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from

heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

(Matthew 3: 14-17)

He had been fifteen, doing well at the grammar school. He had read in the newspapers about the Teddy Boy gangs that roamed South London, but the odd youth he had seen in pseudo-Edwardian clothes had seemed harmless and stupid enough.

He had gone to the pictures in Brixton Hill and decided to walk home to Streatham because he had spent most of the bus money on an ice-cream. They came out of the cinema at the same time. He hardly noticed them as they followed him down the hill.

Then, quite suddenly, they had surrounded him. Pale, mean-faced boys, most of them a year or two older than he was. He realised that he knew two of them vaguely. They were at the big council school in the same street as the grammar school. They used the same football ground.

"Hello," he said weakly.

"Hello, son," said the oldest Teddy Boy. He was chewing gum, standing with one knee bent, grinning at him. "Where you going, then?"

"Home."

"Heouwmm," said the biggest one, imitating his accent. "What are you going to do when you get there?"

"Go to bed." Karl tried to get through the ring, but they wouldn't let him. They pressed him back into a shop doorway. Beyond them, cars droned by on the main road. The street was brightly lit, with street lamps and neon from the shops. Several people passed, but none of them stopped. Karl began to feel panic.

"Got no homework to do, son?" said the boy next to the leader. He was red-headed and freckled and his eyes were a hard grey.

"Want to fight one of us?" another boy asked. It was one of the boys he knew.

"No. I don't fight. Let me go."

"You scared, son?" said the leader, grinning. Ostentatiously, he pulled a streamer of gum from his mouth and then replaced it. He began chewing again.

"No. Why should I want to fight you?"

"You reckon you're better than us, is that it, son?"

"No." He was beginning to tremble. Tears were coming into his eyes. "'Course not."

"'Course not, son."

He moved forward again, but they pushed him back into the doorway.

"You're the bloke with the kraut name ain't you?" said the other boy he knew. "Glow-worm or somethink."

"Glogauer. Let me go."

"Won't your mummy like it if you're back late?"

"More a yid name than a kraut name."

"You a yid, son?"

"He looks like a yid."

"You a yid, son?"

"You a Jewish boy, son?"

"You a yid, son?"

"Shut up!" Karl screamed. He pushed into them. One of them punched him in the stomach. He grunted with pain. Another pushed him and he staggered.

People were still hurrying by on the pavement. They glanced at the group as they went past. One man stopped, but his wife pulled him on. "Just some kids larking about," she said.

"Get his trousers down," one of the boys suggested with a laugh. "That'll prove it."

Karl pushed through them and this time they didn't resist. He began to run down the hill.

"Give him a start," he heard one of the boys say.

He ran on.

They began to follow him, laughing.

They did not catch up with him by the time he turned into the avenue where he lived. He reached the house and ran along the dark passage beside it. He opened the back door. His step-mother was in the kitchen.

"What's the matter with you?" she said.

She was a tall, thin woman ; nervous and hysterical. Her dark hair was untidy.

He went past her into the breakfast-room.

"What's the matter, Karl?" she called. Her voice was high-pitched.

"Nothing," he said.
He didn't want a scene.

It was cold when he woke up. The false dawn was grey and he could see nothing but barren country in all directions. He could not remember a great deal about the previous day, except that he had run a long way.

Dew had gathered on his loincloth. He wet his lips and rubbed the skin over his face. As he always did after a migraine attack he felt weak and completely drained. Looking down at his naked body, he noticed how skinny he had become. Life with the Essenes had caused that, of course.

He wondered why he had panicked so much when John had asked him to baptise him. Was it simply honesty—something in him which resisted deceiving the Essenes into thinking he was a prophet of some kind? It was hard to know.

He wrapped the goatskin about his hips and tied it tightly just above his left thigh. He supposed he had better try to get back to the camp and find John and apologise, see if he could make amends.

The time machine was there now, too. They had dragged it there, using only rawhide ropes.

If a good blacksmith could be found, or some other metal-worker, there was just a chance that it could be repaired. The journey back would be dangerous.

He wondered if he ought to go back right away, or try to shift to a time nearer to the actual crucifixion. He had not gone back specifically to witness the crucifixion, but to get the mood of Jerusalem during the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus was supposed to have entered the city. Monica had thought Jesus had stormed the city with an armed band. She had said that all the evidence pointed to that. All the evidence of one sort did point to it, but he could not accept the evidence. There was more to it, he was sure. If only he could meet Jesus. John had apparently never heard of him, though he had told Glogauer that there was a prophecy that the Messiah would be a Nazarene. There were many prophecies, and many of them conflicted.

He began to walk back in the general direction of the

Essene camp. He could not have come so far. He would soon recognise the hills where they had their caves.

Soon it was very hot and the ground more barren. The air wavered before his eyes. The feeling of exhaustion with which he had awakened increased. His mouth was dry and his legs were weak. He was hungry and there was nothing to eat. There was no sign of the range of hills where the Essenes had their camp.

There was one hill, about two miles away to the south. He decided to make for it. From there he would probably be able to get his bearings, perhaps even see a township where they would give him food.

The sandy soil turned to floating dust around him as his feet disturbed it. A few primitive shrubs clung to the ground and jutting rocks tripped him.

He was bleeding and bruised by the time he began, painfully, to clamber up the hillside.

The journey to the summit (which was much further away than he had originally judged) was difficult. He would slide on the loose stones of the hillside, falling on his face, bracing his torn hands and feet to stop himself from sliding down to the bottom, clinging to tufts of grass and lichen that grew here and there, embracing larger projections of rock when he could, resting frequently, his mind and body both numb with pain and weariness.

He sweated beneath the sun. The dust stuck to the moisture on his half-naked body, caking him from head to foot. The goatskin was in shreds.

The barren world reeled around him, sky somehow merging with land, yellow rock with white clouds. Nothing seemed still.

He reached the summit and lay there gasping. Everything had become unreal.

He heard Monica's voice, thought he glanced her for a moment from the corner of his eye.

Don't be melodramatic, Karl. . . .

She had said that many times. His own voice replied now.

I'm born out of my time, Monica. This age of reason has no place for me. It will kill me in the end.

Her voice replied.

Guilt and fear and your own masochism. You could be a brilliant psychiatrist, but you've given in to all your own neuroses so completely. . . .

"Shut up!"

He rolled over on his back. The sun blazed down on his tattered body.

"Shut up!"

The whole Christian syndrome, Karl. You'll become a Catholic convert next I shouldn't doubt. Where's your strength of mind?

"Shut up! Go away, Monica."

Fear shapes your thoughts. You're not searching for a soul or even a meaning for life. You're searching for comforts.

"Leave me alone, Monica!"

His grimy hands covered his ears. His hair and beard were matted with dust. Blood had congealed on the minor wounds that were now on every part of his body. Above, the sun seemed to pound in unison with his heartbeats.

You're going downhill, Karl, don't you realise that? Downhill. Pull yourself together. You're not entirely incapable of rational thought. . . .

"Oh, Monica! Shut up!"

His voice was harsh and cracked. A few ravens circled the sky above him now. He heard them calling back at him in a voice not unlike his own.

God died in 1945. . . .

"It isn't 1945—it's 28 A.D. God is alive!"

How you can bother to wonder about an obvious syncretistic religion like Christianity—Rabbinic Judaism, Stoic ethics, Greek mystery cults, Oriental ritual. . . .

"It doesn't matter!"

Not to you in your present state of mind.

"I need God!"

That's what it boils down to, doesn't it? Okay, Karl, carve your own crutches. Just think what you could have been if you'd have come to terms with yourself. . . .

Glogauer pulled his ruined body to its feet and stood on the summit of the hill and screamed.

The ravens were startled. They wheeled in the sky and flew away.

The sky was darkening now.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an.hungred.

(Matthew 4: 1-2)

four

THE MADMAN CAME stumbling into the town. His feet stirred the dust and made it dance and dogs barked around him as he walked mechanically, his head turned upwards to face the sun, his arms limp at his sides, his lips moving.

To the townspeople, the words they heard were in no familiar language ; yet they were uttered with such intensity and conviction that God himself might be using this emaciated, naked creature as his spokesman.

They wondered where the madman had come from.

The white town consisted primarily of double- and single-storeyed houses of stone and clay-brick, built around a market place that was fronted by an ancient, simple synagogue outside which old men sat and talked, dressed in dark robes. The town was prosperous and clean, thriving on Roman commerce. Only one or two beggars were in the streets and these were well-fed. The streets followed the rise and fall of the hillside on which they were built. They were winding streets, shady and peaceful ; country streets. There was a smell of newly-cut timber everywhere in the air, and the sound of carpentry, for the town was chiefly famous for its skilled carpenters. It lay on the edge of the Plain of Jezreel, close to the trade route between Damascus and Egypt, and wagons were always leaving it, laden with the work of the town's craftsmen. The town was called Nazareth.

The madman had found it by asking every traveller he saw where it was. He had passed through other towns—Philadelphia, Gerasa, Pella and Scythopolis, following the Roman roads—asking the same question in his outlandish accent. "Where lies Nazareth?"

Some had given him food on the way. Some had asked

for his blessing and he had laid hands on them, speaking in that strange tongue. Some had pelted him with stones and driven him away.

He had crossed the Jordan by the Roman viaduct and continued northwards towards Nazareth.

There had been no difficulty in finding the town, but it had been difficult for him to force himself towards it. He had lost a great deal of blood and had eaten very little on the journey. He would walk until he collapsed and lie there until he could go on, or, as had happened increasingly, until someone found him and had given him a little sour wine or bread to revive him.

Once some Roman legionaries had stopped and with brusque kindness asked him if he had any relatives they could take him to. They had addressed him in pidgin-Aramaic and had been surprised when he replied in a strangely-accented Latin that was purer than the language they spoke themselves.

They asked him if he were a Rabbi or a scholar. He told them he was neither. The officer of the legionaries had offered him some dried meat and wine. The men were part of a patrol that passed this way once a month. They were stocky, brown-faced men, with hard, clean-shaven faces. They were dressed in stained leather kilts and breastplates and sandals, and had iron helmets on their heads, scabbarded short swords at their hips. Even as they stood around him in the evening sunlight they did not seem relaxed. The officer, softer-voiced than his men but otherwise much like them save that he wore a metal breastplate and a long cloak, asked the madman what his name was.

For a moment the madman had paused, his mouth opening and closing, as if he could not remember what he was called.

"Karl," he said at length, doubtfully. It was more a suggestion than a statement.

"Sounds almost like a Roman name," said one of the legionaries.

"Are you a citizen?" the officer asked.

But the madman's mind was wandering, evidently. He looked away from them, muttering to himself.

All at once, he looked back at them and said: "Nazareth?"

"That way." The officer pointed down the road that cut between the hills. "Are you a Jew?"

This seemed to startle the madman. He sprang to his feet and tried to push through the soldiers. They let him through, laughing. He was a harmless madman.

They watched him run down the road.

"One of their prophets, perhaps," said the officer, walking towards his horse. The country was full of them. Every other man you met claimed to be spreading the message of their god. They didn't make much trouble and religion seemed to keep their minds off rebellion. We should be grateful, thought the officer.

His men were still laughing.

They began to march down the road in the opposite direction to the one the madman had taken.

Now the madman was in Nazareth and the townspeople looked at him with curiosity and more than a little suspicion as he staggered into the market square. He could be a wandering prophet or he could be possessed by devils. It was often hard to tell. The rabbis would know.

As he passed the knots of people standing by the merchants' stalls, they fell silent until he had gone by. Women pulled their heavy woollen shawls about their well-fed bodies and men tucked in their cotton robes so that he would not touch them. Normally their instinct would have been to have taxed him with his business in the town, but there was an intensity about his gaze, a quickness and vitality about his face, in spite of his emaciated appearance, that made them treat him with some respect and they kept their distance.

When he reached the centre of the market place, he stopped and looked around him. He seemed slow to notice the people. He blinked and licked his lips.

A woman passed, eyeing him warily. He spoke to her, his voice soft, the words carefully formed. "Is this Nazareth?"

"It is." She nodded and increased her pace.

A man was crossing the square. He was dressed in a

woollen robe of red and brown stripes. There was a red skull cap on his curly, black hair. His face was plump and cheerful. The madman walked across the man's path and stopped him. "I seek a carpenter."

"There are many carpenters in Nazareth. The town is famous for its carpenters. I am a carpenter myself. Can I help you?" The man's voice was good-humoured, patronising.

"Do you know a carpenter called Joseph? A descendant of David. He has a wife called Mary and several children. One is named Jesus."

The cheerful man screwed his face into a mock frown and scratched the back of his neck. "I know more than one Joseph. There is one poor fellow in yonder street." He pointed. "He has a wife called Mary. Try there. You should soon find him. Look for a man who never laughs."

The madman looked in the direction in which the man pointed. As soon as he saw the street, he seemed to forget everything else and strode towards it.

In the narrow street he entered the smell of cut timber was even stronger. He walked ankle-deep in wood-shavings. From every building came the thud of hammers, the scrape of saws. There were planks of all sizes resting against the pale, shaded walls of the houses and there was hardly room to pass between them. Many of the carpenters had their benches just outside their doors. They were carving bowls, operating simple lathes, shaping wood into everything imaginable. They looked up as the madman entered the street and approached one old carpenter in a leather apron who sat at his bench carving a figurine. The man had grey hair and seemed short-sighted. He peered up at the madman.

"What do you want?"

"I seek a carpenter called Joseph. He has a wife—Mary."

The old man gestured with the hand that held the half-completed figurine. "Two houses along on the other side of the street."

The house the madman came to had very few planks leaning against it, and the quality of the timber seemed poorer than the other wood he had seen. The bench near

the entrance was warped on one side and the man who sat hunched over it repairing a stool seemed misshapen also. He straightened up as the madman touched his shoulder. His face was lined and pouched with misery. His eyes were tired and his thin beard had premature streaks of grey. He coughed slightly, perhaps in surprise at being disturbed.

"Are you Joseph?" asked the madman.

"I've no money."

"I want nothing—just to ask a few questions."

"I'm Joseph. Why do you want to know?"

"Have you a son?"

"Several, and daughters, too."

"Your wife is called Mary? You are of David's line."

The man waved his hand impatiently. "Yes, for what good either have done me. . . ."

"I wish to meet one of your sons. Jesus. Can you tell me where he is?"

"That good-for-nothing. What has he done now?"

"Where is he?"

Joseph's eyes became more calculating as he stared at the madman. "Are you a seer of some kind? Have you come to cure my son?"

"I am a prophet of sorts. I can foretell the future."

Joseph got up with a sigh. "You can see him. Come." He led the madman through the gateway into the cramped courtyard of the house. It was crowded with pieces of wood, broken furniture and implements, rotting sacks of shavings. They entered the darkened house. In the first room—evidently a kitchen—a woman stood by a large clay stove. She was tall and bulging with fat. Her long, black hair was unbound and greasy, falling over large, lustrous eyes that still had the heat of sensuality. She looked the madman over.

"There's no food for beggars," she grunted. "He eats enough as it is." She gestured with a wooden spoon at a small figure sitting in the shadow of a corner. The figure shifted as she spoke.

"He seeks our Jesus," said Joseph to the woman. "Perhaps he comes to ease our burden."

The woman gave the madman a sidelong look and

shrugged. She licked her red lips with a fat tongue. "Jesus!"

The figure in the corner stood up.

"That's him," said the woman with a certain satisfaction.

The madman frowned, shaking his head rapidly. "No."

The figure was misshapen. It had a pronounced hunched back and a cast in its left eye. The face was vacant and foolish. There was a little spittle on the lips. It giggled as its name was repeated. It took a crooked step forward. "Jesus," it said. The word was slurred and thick. "Jesus."

"That's all he can say." The woman sneered. "He's always been like that."

"God's judgment," said Joseph bitterly.

"What is wrong with him?" There was a pathetic, desperate note in the madman's voice.

"He's always been like that." The woman turned back to the stove. "You can have him if you want him. Addled inside and outside. I was carrying him when my parents married me off to that half-man. . . ."

"You shameless——" Joseph stopped as his wife glared at him. He turned to the madman. "What's your business with our son?"

"I wished to talk to him. I . . ."

"He's no oracle—no seer—we used to think he might be. There are still people in Nazareth who come to him to cure them or tell their fortunes, but he only giggles at them and speaks his name over and over again. . . ."

"Are—you sure——there is not—— something about him—you have not noticed?"

"Sure!" Mary snorted sardonically. "We need money badly enough. If he had any magical powers, we'd know."

Jesus giggled again and limped away into another room.

"It is impossible," the madman murmured. Could history itself have changed? Could he be in some other dimension of time where Christ had never been?

Joseph appeared to notice the look of agony in the madman's eyes.

"What is it?" he said. "What do you see? You said you foretold the future. Tell us how we will fare?"

"Not *now*," said the prophet, turning away. "Not *now*."

He ran from the house and down the street with its smell-

of planed oak, cedar and cypress. He ran back to the market place and stopped, looking wildly about him. He saw the synagogue directly ahead of him. He began to walk towards it.

The man he had spoken to earlier was still in the market place, buying cooking pots to give to his daughter as a wedding gift. He nodded towards the strange man as he entered the synagogue. "He's a relative of Joseph the carpenter," he told the man beside him. "A prophet, I shouldn't wonder."

The madman, the prophet, Karl Glogauer, the time-traveller, the neurotic psychiatrist manqué, the searcher for meaning, the masochist, the man with a death-wish, and the messiah-complex, the anachronism, made his way into the synagogue gasping for breath. He had seen the man he had sought. He had seen Jesus, the son of Joseph and Mary. He had seen a man he recognised without any doubt as a congenital imbecile.

"All men have a messiah-complex, Karl," Monica had said.

The memories were less complete now. His sense of time and identity was becoming confused.

"There were dozens of messiahs in Galilee at the time. That Jesus should have been the one to carry the myth and the philosophy was a coincidence of history. . . ."

"There must have been more to it than that, Monica."

Every Tuesday in the room above the Occult Bookshop, the Jungian discussion group would meet for purposes of group analysis and therapy. Glogauer had not organised the group, but he had willingly lent his premises to it and had joined it eagerly. It was a great relief to talk with like-minded people once a week. One of his reasons for buying the Occult Bookshop was so that he would meet interesting people like those who attended the Jungian discussion group.

An obsession with Jung brought them together, but everyone had special obsessions of their own. Mrs. Rita Blenn charted the courses of flying saucers, though it was not clear if she believed in them or not. Hugh Joyce

believed that all Jungian archetypes derived from the original race of Atlanteans who had perished millennia before. Alan Cheddar, the youngest of the group, was interested in Indian mysticism, and Sandra Peterson, the organiser, was a great witchcraft specialist. James Headington was interested in time. He was the group's pride; he was Sir James Headington, war-time inventor, very rich and with all sorts of decorations for his contribution to the Allied victory. He had had the reputation of being a great improviser during the war, but after it he had become something of an embarrassment to the War Office. He was a crank, they thought, and what was worse, he aired his crankiness in public.

Every so often, Sir James would tell the other members of the group about his time machine. They humoured him. Most of them were liable to exaggerate their own experiences connected with their different interests.

One Tuesday evening, after everyone else had left, Headington told Glogauer that his machine was ready.

"I can't believe it," Glogauer said truthfully.

"You're the first person I've told."

"Why me?"

"I don't know. I like you—and the shop."

"You haven't told the government."

Headington had chuckled. "Why should I? Not until I've tested it fully, anyway. Serves them right for putting me out to pasture."

"You don't know it works?"

"I'm sure it does. Would you like to see it?"

"A time machine." Glogauer smiled weakly.

"Come and see it."

"Why me?"

"I thought you might be interested. I know you don't hold with the orthodox view of science. . . ."

Glogauer felt sorry for him.

"Come and see," said Headington.

He went down to Banbury the next day. The same day he left 1976 and arrived in 28 A.D.

The synagogue was cool and quiet with a subtle scent of incense. The rabbis guided him into the courtyard. They,

like the townspeople, did not know what to make of him, but they were sure it was not a devil that possessed him. It was their custom to give shelter to the roaming prophets who were now everywhere in Galilee, though this one was stranger than the rest. His face was immobile and his body was stiff, and there were tears running down his dirty cheeks. They had never seen such agony in a man's eyes before.

"Science can say how, but it never asks why," he had told Monica. "It can't answer."

"Who wants to know?" she'd replied.

"I do."

"Well, you'll never find out, will you?"

"Sit down, my son," said the rabbi. "What do you wish to ask of us?"

"Where is Christ?" he said. "Where is Christ?"

They did not understand the language.

"Is it Greek?" asked one, but another shook his head.

Kyrios: The Lord.

Adonai: The Lord.

Where was the Lord?

He frowned, looking vaguely about him.

"I must rest," he said in their language.

"Where are you from?"

He could not think what to answer.

"Where are you from?" a rabbi repeated.

"*Ha-Olam Hab-Bah . . .*" he murmured at length.

They looked at one another. "*Ha-Olam Hab-Bah*;" they said.

Ha-Olam Hab-Bah; Ha-Olam Haz-Zeh: The world to come and the world that is.

"Do you bring us a message?" said one of the rabbis. They were used to prophets, certainly, but none like this one. "A message?"

"I do not know," said the prophet hoarsely. "I must rest. I am hungry."

"Come. We will give you food and a place to sleep."

He could only eat a little of the rich food and the bed with its straw-stuffed mattress was too soft for him. He was not used to it.

He slept badly, shouting as he dreamed, and, outside the room, the rabbis listened, but could understand little of what he said.

Karl Glogauer stayed in the synagogue for several weeks. He would spend most of his time reading in the library, searching through the long scrolls for some answer to his dilemma. The words of the Testaments, in many cases capable of a dozen interpretations, only confused him further. There was nothing to grasp, nothing to tell him what had gone wrong.

The rabbis kept their distance for the most part. They had accepted him as a holy man. They were proud to have him in their synagogue. They were sure that he was one of the special chosen of God and they waited patiently for him to speak to them.

But the prophet said little, muttering only to himself in snatches of their own language and snatches of the incomprehensible language he often used, even when he addressed them directly.

In Nazareth, the townsfolk talked of little else but the mysterious prophet in the synagogue, but the rabbis would not answer their questions. They would tell the people to go about their business, that there were things they were not yet meant to know. In this way, as priests had always done, they avoided questions they could not answer while at the same time appearing to have much more knowledge than they actually possessed.

Then, one sabbath, he appeared in the public part of the synagogue and took his place with the others who had come to worship.

The man who was reading from the scroll on his left stumbled over the words, glancing at the prophet from the corner of his eye.

The prophet sat and listened, his expression remote.

The Chief Rabbi looked uncertainly at him, then signed that the scroll should be passed to the prophet. This was done hesitantly by a boy who placed the scroll into the prophet's hands.

The prophet looked at the words for a long time and

then began to read. The prophet read without comprehending at first what he read. It was the book of Esaias.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all of them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

(Luke 4: 18-20)

five

THEY FOLLOWED HIM now, as he walked away from Nazareth towards the Lake of Galilee. He was dressed in the white linen robe they had given him and though they thought he led them, they, in fact, drove him before them.

"He is our messiah," they said to those that enquired. And there were already rumours of miracles.

When he saw the sick, he pitied them and tried to do what he could because they expected something of them. Many he could do nothing for, but others, obviously in psychosomatic conditions, he could help. They believed in his power more strongly than they believed in their sickness. So he cured them.

When he came to Capernaum, some fifty people followed him into the streets of the city. It was already known that he was in some way associated with John the Baptist, who enjoyed huge prestige in Galilee and had been declared a true prophet by many Pharisees. Yet this man had a power greater, in some ways, than John's. He was not the orator that the Baptist was, but he had worked miracles.

Capernaum was a sprawling town beside the crystal lake of Galilee, its houses separated by large market gardens. Fishing boats were moored at the white quayside, as well as trading ships that plied the lakeside towns. Though the green hills came down from all sides to the lake, Capernaum itself was built on flat ground, sheltered by the

hills. It was a quiet town and, like most others in Galilee, had a large population of gentiles. Greek, Roman and Egyptian traders walked its streets and many had made permanent homes there. There was a prosperous middle-class of merchants, artisans and ship-owners, as well as doctors, lawyers and scholars, for Capernaum was on the borders of the provinces of Galilee, Trachonitis and Syria and though a comparatively small town was a useful junction for trade and travel.

The strange, mad prophet in his swirling linen robes, followed by the heterogeneous crowd that was primarily composed of poor folk but also could be seen to contain men of some distinction, swept into Capernaum. The news spread that this man really could foretell the future, that he had already predicted the arrest of John by Herod Antipas and soon after Herod had imprisoned the Baptist at Peraea. He did not make the predictions in general terms, using vague words the way other prophets did. He spoke of things that were to happen in the near future and he spoke of them in detail.

None knew his name. He was simply the prophet from Nazareth, or the Nazarene. Some said he was a relative, perhaps the son, of a carpenter in Nazareth, but this could be because the written words for 'son of a carpenter' and 'magus' were almost the same and the confusion had come about in that way. There was even a very faint rumour that his name was Jesus. The name had been used once or twice, but when they asked him if that was, indeed, his name, he denied it or else, in his abstracted way, refused to answer at all.

His actual preaching tended to lack the fire of John's. This man spoke gently, rather vaguely, and smiled often. He spoke of God in a strange way, too, and he appeared to be connected, as John was, with the Essenes, for he preached against the accumulation of personal wealth and spoke of mankind as a brotherhood, as they did.

But it was the miracles that they watched for as he was guided to the graceful synagogue of Capernaum. No prophet before him had healed the sick and seemed to understand the troubles that people rarely spoke of. It was

his sympathy that they responded to, rather than the words he spoke.

For the first time in his life, Karl Glogauer had forgotten about Karl Glogauer. For the first time in his life he was doing what he had always sought to do as a psychiatrist.

But it was not his life. He was bringing a myth to life—a generation before that myth would be born. He was completing a certain kind of psychic circuit. He was not changing history, but he was giving history more substance.

He could not bear to think that Jesus had been nothing more than a myth. It was in his power to make Jesus a physical reality rather than the creation of a process of mythogenesis.

So he spoke in the synagogues and he spoke of a gentler God than any most of them had heard of, and where he could remember them, he told them parables.

And gradually the need to justify what he was doing faded and his sense of identity grew increasingly more tenuous and was replaced by a different sense of identity, where he gave greater and greater substance to the rôle he had chosen. It was an archetypal rôle. It was a rôle to appeal to a disciple of Jung. It was a rôle that went beyond a mere imitation. It was a rôle that he must now play out to the very last grand detail. Karl Glogauer had discovered the reality he had been seeking.

And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not. And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commaundeth the unclean spirits, and they come out. And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about.

(Luke 4: 33-37)

"Mass hallucination. Miracles, flying saucers, ghosts, it's all the same," Monica had said.

"Very likely," he had replied. "But *why* did they see them?"

"Because they wanted to."

"Why did they want to?"

"Because they were afraid."

"You think that's all there is to it?"

"Isn't it enough?"

When he left Capernaum for the first time, many more people accompanied him. It had become impractical to stay in the town, for the business of the town had been brought almost to a standstill by the crowds that sought to see him work his simple miracles.

He spoke to them in the spaces beyond the towns. He talked with intelligent, literate men who appeared to have something in common with him. Some of them were the owners of fishing fleets—Simon, James and John among them. Another was a doctor, another a civil servant who had first heard him speak in Capernaum.

"There must be twelve," he said to them one day. "There must be a zodiac."

He was not careful in what he said. Many of his ideas were strange. Many of the things he talked about were unfamiliar to them. Some Pharisees thought he blasphemed.

One day he met a man he recognised as an Essene from the colony near Machaerus.

"John would speak with you," said the Essene.

"Is John not dead yet?" he asked the man.

"He is confined at Perea. I would think Herod is too frightened to kill him. He lets John walk about within the walls and gardens of the palace, lets him speak with his men, but John fears that Herod will find the courage soon to have him stoned or decapitated. He needs your help."

"How can I help him? He is to die. There is no hope for him."

The Essene looked uncomprehendingly into the mad eyes of the prophet.

"But, master, there is no one else who can help him."

"I have done all that he wished me to do," said the prophet. "I have healed the sick and preached to the poor."

"I did not know he wished this. Now he needs help, master. You could save his life."

The prophet had drawn the Essene away from the crowd.

"His life cannot be saved."

"But if it is not the unrighteous will prosper and the Kingdom of Heaven will not be restored."

"His life cannot be saved."

"Is it God's will?"

"If I am God, then it is God's will."

Hopelessly, the Essene turned and began to walk away from the crowd.

John the Baptist would have to die. Glogauer had no wish to change history, only to strengthen it.

He moved on, with his following, through Galilee. He had selected his twelve educated men, and the rest who followed him were still primarily poor people. To them he offered their only hope of fortune. Many were those who had been ready to follow John against the Romans, but now John was imprisoned. Perhaps this man would lead them in revolt, to loot the riches of Jerusalem and Jericho and Caesarea. Tired and hungry, their eyes glazed by the burning sun, they followed the man in the white robe. They needed to hope and they found reasons for their hope. They saw him work greater miracles.

Once he preached to them from a boat, as was often his custom, and as he walked back to the shore through the shallows, it seemed to them that he walked over the water.

All through Galilee in the autumn they wandered, hearing from everyone the news of John's beheading. Despair at the Baptist's death turned to renewed hope in this new prophet who had known him.

In Caesarea they were driven from the city by Roman guards used to the wildmen with their prophecies who roamed the country.

They were banned from other cities as the prophet's fame grew. Not only the Roman authorities, but the Jewish ones as well seemed unwilling to tolerate the new prophet

as they had tolerated John. The political climate was changing.

It became hard to find food. They lived on what they could find, starving like starved animals.

He taught them how to pretend to eat and take their minds off their hunger.

Karl Glogauer, witch-doctor, psychiatrist, hypnotist, messiah.

Sometimes his conviction in his chosen rôle wavered and those that followed him would be disturbed when he contradicted himself. Often, now, they called him the name they had heard, Jesus the Nazarene. Most of the time he did not stop them from using the name, but at others he became angry and cried a peculiar, guttural name.

"Karl Glogauer! Karl Glogauer!"

And they said, Behold, he speaks with the voice of Adonai.

"Call me not by that name!" he would shout, and they would become disturbed and leave him by himself until his anger had subsided.

When the weather changed and the winter came, they went back to Capernaum, which had become a stronghold of his followers.

In Capernaum he waited the winter through, making prophecies.

Many of these prophecies concerned himself and the fate of those that followed him.

Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ. From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

(Matthew 16: 20-21)

They were watching television at her flat. Monica was eating an apple. It was between six and seven on a warm Sunday evening. Monica gestured at the screen with her half-eaten apple.

"Look at that nonsense," she said. "You can't honestly tell me it means anything to you."

The programme was a religious one, about a pop-opera in a Hampstead Church. The opera told the story of the crucifixion.

"Pop-groups in the pulpit," she said. "What a come down."

He didn't reply. The programme seemed obscene to him, in an obscure way. He couldn't argue with her.

"God's corpse is really beginning to rot now," she jeered. "Whew! The stink!"

"Turn it off, then," he said quietly.

"What's the pop-group called? The Maggots?"

"Very funny. I'll turn it off, shall I?"

"No, I want to watch. It's funny."

"Oh, turn it off!"

"Imitation of Christ!" she snorted. "It's a bloody caricature."

A negro singer, who was playing Christ and singing flat to a banal accompaniment, began to drone out lifeless lyrics about the brotherhood of man.

"If he sounded like that, no wonder they nailed him up," said Monica.

He reached forward and switched the picture off.

"I was enjoying it." She spoke with mock disappointment. "It was a lovely swan-song."

Later, she said with a trace of affection that worried him, "You old fogey. What a pity. You could have been John Wesley or Calvin or someone. You can't be a messiah these days, not in your terms. There's nobody to listen."

s i x

THE PROPHET was living in the house of a man called Simon, though the prophet preferred to call him Peter. Simon was grateful to the prophet because he had cured his wife of a complaint which she had suffered from for some time. It had been a mysterious complaint, but the prophet had cured her almost effortlessly.

There were a great many strangers in Capernaum at that time; many of them coming to see the prophet. Simon

warned the prophet that some were known agents of the Romans or the Pharisees. The Pharisees had not, on the whole, been antipathetic towards the prophet, though they distrusted the talk of miracles that they heard. However, the whole political atmosphere was disturbed and the Roman occupation troops, from Pilate, through his officers, down to the troops, were tense, expecting an outbreak but unable to see any tangible signs that one was coming.

Pilate himself hoped for trouble on a large scale. It would prove to Tiberius that the emperor had been too lenient with the Jews over the matter of the votive shields. Pilate would be vindicated and his power over the Jews increased. At present he was on bad terms with all the Tetrarchs of the provinces—particularly the unstable Herod Antipas who had seemed at one time his only supporter. Aside from the political situation, his own domestic situation was upset in that his neurotic wife was having her nightmares again and was demanding far more attention from him than he could afford to give her.

There might be a possibility, he thought, of provoking an incident, but he would have to be careful that Tiberius never learnt of it. This new prophet might provide a focus, but so far the man had done nothing against the laws of either the Jews or the Romans. There was no law that forbade a man to claim he was a messiah, as some said this one had done, and he was hardly inciting the people to revolt—rather the contrary.

Looking through the window of his chamber, with a view of the minarets and spires of Jerusalem, Pilate considered the information his spies had brought him.

Soon after the festival that the Romans called Saturnalia, the prophet and his followers left Capernaum again and began to travel through the country.

There were fewer miracles now that the hot weather had passed, but his prophecies were eagerly asked. He warned them of all the mistakes that would be made in the future, and of all the crimes that would be committed in his name.

Through Galilee he wandered, and through Samaria, following the good Roman roads towards Jerusalem.

The time of the Passover was coming close now.

In Jerusalem, the Roman officials discussed the coming festival. It was always a time of the worst disturbances. There had been riots before during the Feast of the Passover, and doubtless there would be trouble of some kind this year, too.

Pilate spoke to the Pharisees, asking for their co-operation. The Pharisees said they would do what they could, but they could not help it if the people acted foolishly.

Scowling, Pilate dismissed them.

His agents brought him reports from all over the territory. Some of the reports mentioned the new prophet, but said that he was harmless.

Pilate thought privately that he might be harmless now, but if he reached Jerusalem during the Passover, he might not be so harmless.

Two weeks before the Feast of the Passover, the prophet reached the town of Bethany near Jerusalem. Some of his Galilean followers had friends in Bethany and these friends were more than willing to shelter the man they had heard of from other pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem and the Great Temple.

The reason they had come to Bethany was because the prophet had become disturbed at the number of the people following him.

"There are too many," he had said to Simon. "Too many, Peter."

Glogauer's face was haggard now. His eyes were set deeper into their sockets and he said little.

Sometimes he would look around him vaguely, as if unsure where he was.

News came to the house in Bethany that Roman agents had been making enquiries about him. It did not seem to disturb him. On the contrary, he nodded thoughtfully, as if satisfied.

Once he walked with two of his followers across country to look at Jerusalem. The bright yellow walls of the city looked splendid in the afternoon light. The towers and tall buildings, many of them decorated in mosaic reds, blues and yellows, could be seen from several miles away.

The prophet turned back towards Bethany.

"When shall we go into Jerusalem?" one of his followers asked him.

"Not yet," said Glogauer. His shoulders were hunched and he grasped his chest with his arms and hands as if cold.

Two days before the Feast of the Passover in Jerusalem, the prophet took his men towards the Mount of Olives and a suburb of Jerusalem that was built on its side and called Bethphage.

"Get me a donkey," he told them. "A colt. I must fulfil the prophecy now."

"Then all will know you are the Messiah," said Andrew.

"Yes."

Glogauer sighed. He felt afraid again, but this time it was not physical fear. It was the fear of an actor who was about to make his final, most dramatic scene and who was not sure he could do it well.

There was cold sweat on Glogauer's upper lip. He wiped it off.

In the poor light he peered at the men around him. He was still uncertain of some of their names. He was not interested in their names, particularly; only in their number. There were ten here. The other two were looking for the donkey.

They stood on the grassy slope of the Mount of Olives, looking towards Jerusalem and the great Temple which lay below. There was a light, warm breeze blowing.

"Judas?" said Glogauer enquiringly.

There was one called Judas.

"Yes, master," he said. He was tall and good looking, with curly red hair and neurotic intelligent eyes. Glogauer believed he was an epileptic.

Glogauer looked thoughtfully at Judas Iscariot. "I will want you to help me later," he said, "when we have entered Jerusalem."

"How, master?"

"You must take a message to the Romans."

"The Romans?" Iscariot looked troubled. "Why?"

"It must be the Romans. It can't be the Jews—they would use a stake or an axe. I'll tell you more when the time comes."

The sky was dark now, and the stars were out over the Mount of Olives. It had become cold. Glogauer shivered.

*Rejoice greatly O daughter of Zion,
Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem:
Behold, thy King cometh unto thee!
He is just and having salvation ;
Lowly and riding upon an ass,
And upon a colt, the foal of an ass.*

(Zechariah 9:9)

"Osha'na! Osha'na! Osha'na!"

As Glogauer rode the donkey into the city, his followers ran ahead, throwing down palm branches. On both sides of the street were crowds, forewarned by the followers of his coming.

Now the new prophet could be seen to be fulfilling the prophecies of the ancient prophets and many believed that he had come to lead them against the Romans. Even now, possibly, he was on his way to Pilate's house to confront the procurator.

"Osha'na! Osha'na!"

Glogauer looked around distractedly. The back of the donkey, though softened by the coats of his followers, was uncomfortable. He swayed and clung to the beast's mane. He heard the words, but could not make them out clearly.

"Osha'na! Osha'na!"

It sounded like 'hosanna' at first, before he realised that they were shouting the Aramaic for 'Free us'.

"Free us! Free us!"

John had planned to rise in arms against the Romans this Passover. Many had expected to take part in the rebellion.

They believed that he was taking John's place as a rebel leader.

"No," he muttered at them as he looked around at their expectant faces. "No, I am the messiah. I cannot free you. I can't. . . ."

They did not hear him above their own shouts.

Karl Glogauer entered Christ. Christ entered Jerusalem. The story was approaching its climax.

"Oshia-na!"

It was not in the story. He could not help them.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. Then the disciples looked at one another, doubting of whom he spake. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.

(John 13: 20-27)

Judas Iscariot frowned with some uncertainty as he left the room and went out into the crowded street, making his way towards the governor's palace. Doubtless he was to perform a part in a plan to deceive the Romans and have the people rise up in Jesus' defence, but he thought the scheme foolhardy. The mood amongst the jostling men, women and children in the streets was tense. Many more Roman soldiers than usual patrolled the city.

Pilate was a stout man. His face was self-indulgent and his eyes were hard and shallow. He looked disdainfully at the Jew.

"We do not pay informers whose information is proved to be false," he warned.

"I do not seek money, lord," said Judas, feigning the ingratiating manner that the Romans seemed to expect of the Jews. "I am a loyal subject of the Emperor."

"Who is this rebel?"

"Jesus of Nazareth, lord. He entered the city today. . . ."

"I know. I saw him. But I heard he preached of peace and obeying the law."

"To deceive you, lord."

Pilate frowned. It was likely. It smacked of the kind of deceit he had grown to anticipate in these soft-spoken people.

"Have you proof?"

"I am one of his lieutenants, lord. I will testify to his guilt."

Pilate pursed his heavy lips. He could not afford to offend the Pharisees at this moment. They had given him enough trouble. Caiaphas, in particular, would be quick to cry 'injustice' if he arrested the man.

"He claims to be the rightful king of the Jews, the descendant of David," said Judas, repeating what his master had told him to say.

"Does he?" Pilate looked thoughtfully out of the window.

"As for the Pharisees, lord. . .

"What of them?"

"The Pharisees distrust him. They would see him dead. He speaks against them."

Pilate nodded. His eyes were hooded as he considered this information. The Pharisees might hate the madman, but they would be quick to make political capital out of his arrest.

"The Pharisees want him arrested," Judas continued. "The people flock to listen to the prophet and today many of them rioted in the Temple in his name."

"Is this true?"

"It is true, lord." It was true. Some half-a-dozen people had attacked the money-changers in the Temple and tried to rob them. When they had been arrested, they had said they had been carrying out the will of the Nazarene.

"I cannot make the arrest," Pilate said musingly. The situation in Jerusalem was already dangerous, but if they were to arrest this 'king', they might find that they precipitated a revolt. Tiberius would blame him, not the Jews. The Pharisees must be won over. They must make the arrest. "Wait here," he said to Judas, "I will send a message to Caiaphas."

And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very

heavy; And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.

(Mark 14: 32-34)

Glogauer could see the mob approaching now. For the first time since Nazareth he felt physically weak and exhausted. They were going to kill him. He had to die; he accepted that, but he was afraid of the pain that was to come. He sat down on the ground of the hillside, watching the torches as they came closer.

"The ideal of martyrdom only ever existed in the minds of a few ascetics," Monica had said. "Otherwise it was morbid masochism, an easy way to forgo ordinary responsibility, a method of keeping repressed people under control. . . ."

"It isn't as simple as that. . . ."

"It is, Karl."

He could show Monica now. His regret was that she was unlikely ever to know. He had meant to write everything down and put it into the time machine and hope that it would be recovered. It was strange. He was not a religious man in the usual sense. He was an agnostic. It was not conviction that had led him to defend religion against Monica's cynical contempt for it; it was rather *lack* of conviction in the ideal in which she had set her own faith, the ideal of science as a solver of all problems. He could not share her faith and there was nothing else but religion, though he could not believe in the kind of God of Christianity. The God seen as a mystical force of the mysteries of Christianity and other great religions had not been personal enough for him. His rational mind had told him that God did not exist in any personal form. His unconscious had told him that faith in science was not enough.

"Science is basically opposed to religion," Monica had once said harshly. No matter how many Jesuits get together and rationalise their views of science, the fact remains that religion cannot accept the fundamental attitudes of science and it is implicit to science to attack the fundamental principles of religion. The only area in

which there is no difference and need be no war is in the ultimate assumption. One may or may not assume there is a supernatural being called God. But as soon as one begins to defend one's assumption, there must be strife."

"You're talking about organised religion. . . ."

"I'm talking about religion as opposed to a belief. Who needs the ritual of religion when we have the far superior ritual of science to replace it? Religion is a reasonable substitute for knowledge. But there is no longer any need for substitutes, Karl. Science offers a sounder basis on which to formulate systems of thought and ethics. We don't need the carrot of heaven and the big stick of hell any more when science can show the consequences of actions and men can judge easily for themselves whether those actions are right or wrong."

"I can't accept it."

"That's because you're sick. I'm sick, too, but at least I can see the promise of health."

"I can only see the threat of death. . . ."

As they had agreed, Judas kissed him on the cheek and the mixed force of Temple guards and Roman soldiers surrounded him.

To the Romans he said, with some difficulty, "I am the King of the Jews." To the Pharisees' servants he said: "I am the messiah who has come to destroy your masters." Now he was committed and the final ritual was to begin.

s e v e n

IT WAS AN untidy trial, an arbitrary mixture of Roman and Jewish law which did not altogether satisfy anyone. The object was accomplished after several conferences between Pontius Pilate and Caiaphas and three attempts to bend and merge their separate legal systems in order to fit the expediencies of the situation. Both needed a scapegoat for their different purposes and so at last the result was achieved and the madman convicted, on the one hand of rebellion against Rome and on the other of heresy.

A peculiar feature of the trial was that the witnesses

were all followers of the man and yet had seemed eager to see him convicted.

The Pharisees agreed that the Roman method of execution would fit the time and the situation best in this case and it was decided to crucify him. The man had prestige, however, so that it would be necessary to use some of the tried Roman methods of humiliation in order to make him into a pathetic and ludicrous figure in the eyes of the pilgrims. Pilate assured the Pharisees that he would see to it, but he made sure that they signed documents that gave their approval to his actions.

And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band. And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head, And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.

(Mark 15: 16-20)

His brain was clouded now, by pain and by the ritual of humiliation; by his having completely given himself up to his rôle.

He was too weak to bear the heavy wooden cross and he walked behind it as it was dragged towards Golgotha by a Cyrenian whom the Romans had press-ganged for the purpose.

As he staggered through the crowded, silent streets, watched by those who had thought he would lead them against the Roman overlords, his eyes filled with tears so that his sight was blurred and he occasionally staggered off the road and was nudged back on to it by one of the Roman guards.

"You are too emotional, Karl. Why don't you use that brain of yours and pull yourself together. . . ."

He remembered the words, but it was difficult to remember who had said them or who Karl was.

The road that led up the side of the hill was stony and

he slipped sometimes, remembering another hill he had climbed long ago. It seemed to him that he had been a child, but the memory merged with others and it was impossible to tell.

He was breathing heavily and with some difficulty. The pain of the thorns in his head was barely felt, but his whole body seemed to throb in unison with his heartbeat. It was like a drum.

It was evening. The sun was setting. He fell on his face, cutting his head on a sharp stone, just as he reached the top of the hill. He fainted.

And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is being interpreted, The place of the skull. And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.

(Mark 15: 22-23)

He knocked the cup aside. The soldier shrugged and reached out for one of his arms. Another soldier already held the other arm.

As he recovered consciousness Glogauer began to tremble violently. He felt the pain intensely as the ropes bit into the flesh of his wrists and ankles. He struggled.

He felt something cold placed against his palm. Although it only covered a small area in the centre of his hand it seemed very heavy. He heard a sound that also was in rhythm with his heartbeats. He turned his head to look at the hand.

The large iron peg was being driven into his hand by a soldier swinging a mallet as he lay on the cross which was at this moment horizontal on the ground. He watched, wondering why there was no pain. The soldier swung the mallet higher as the peg met the resistance of the wood. Twice he missed the peg and struck Glogauer's fingers.

Glogauer looked to the other side and saw that the second soldier was also hammering in a peg. Evidently he missed the peg a great many times because the fingers of the hand were bloody and crushed.

The first soldier finished hammering in his peg and turned his attention to the feet. Glogauer felt the iron slide through his flesh, heard it hammered home.

Using a pulley, they began to haul the cross into a vertical position. Glogauer noticed that he was alone. There were no others being crucified that day.

He got a clear view of the lights of Jerusalem below him. There was still a little light in the sky but not much. Soon it would be completely dark. There was a small crowd looking on. One of the women reminded him of Monica. He called to her.

"Monica?"

But his voice was cracked and the word was a whisper. The woman did not look up.

He felt his body dragging at the nails which supported it. He thought he felt a twinge of pain in his left hand. He seemed to be bleeding very heavily.

It was odd, he reflected, that it should be him hanging here. He supposed that it was the event he had originally come to witness. There was little doubt, really. Everything had gone perfectly.

The pain in his left hand increased.

He glanced down at the Roman guards who were playing dice at the foot of his cross. They seemed absorbed in their game. He could not see the markings of the dice from this distance.

He sighed. The movement of his chest seemed to throw extra strain on his hands. The pain was quite bad now. He winced and tried somehow to ease himself back against the wood.

The pain began to spread through his body. He gritted his teeth. It was dreadful. He gasped and shouted. He writhed.

There was no longer any light in the sky. Heavy clouds obscured stars and moon.

From below came whispered voices.

"Let me down," he called. "Oh, please let me down!"

The pain filled him. He slumped forward, but nobody released him.

A little while later he raised his head. The movement caused a return of the agony and again he began to writhe on the cross.

"Let me down. Please. Please stop it!"

Every part of his flesh, every muscle and tendon and bone of him, was filled with an almost impossible degree of pain.

He knew he would not survive until the next day as he had thought he might. He had not realised the extent of his pain.

And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

(Mark 15: 34)

Glogauer coughed. It was a dry, barely heard sound. The soldiers below the cross heard it because the night was now so quiet.

"It's funny," one said. "Yesterday they were worshipping him. Today they seemed to want us to kill him—even the ones who were closest to him."

"I'll be glad when we get out of this country," said another.

He heard Monica's voice again. "It's weakness and fear, Karl, that's driven you to this. Martyrdom is a conceit. Can't you see that?"

Weakness and fear.

He coughed once more and the pain returned, but it was duller now.

Just before he died he began to talk again, muttering the words until his breath was gone. "It's a lie. It's a lie. It's a lie."

Later, after his body was stolen by the servants of some doctors who believed it to have special properties, there were rumours that he had not died. But the corpse was already rotting in the doctors' dissecting rooms and would soon be destroyed.

THE END

That evening sun go down

By Arthur Sellings

AGAINST ALL THE BLUE of that rotate I hivelong, sick for three sun, not this moty yellow but so bright soulshadow of one. Where red, where green? Not soulshadow now even, but fable told of world never seen. *Yingen yingen* away in time and space and I most deep ordained here.

Hurry through hive seeking soulbalm my puny. He squat in corner, gaggle around by three of *We*. Making joynoise. I sicken to hear *We* try that nomeaning noise. Puny for balm, make *We* aloft, good. Joynoise for puny. For *We* unright, against order. Against racepride. For *We* lucklack all that tackle of muscle thread, of nervefinger link to bray. Have I not open one rotate that wild puny, to match with inmost soulscan of me? Of nature great pain in me. Greater pain to wildpuny and lastloss of punysoul.

But proof. Tape in store, even *shruhn* to Hiveworld as metafact for all time not yet born.

One of gaggle lift head. I see it is Wenonumber who one rotate couple against law with puny and is yet under ban so his mind be open and his wrongthink smothered at first spark. Yet what here? Not his think smothered but open, moving mind of other two? *We* become, one revolve after one, dismind, I think.

Jagged mind in me. I open and roar. Three fall away. Before rank of me flee.

Puny look up. In hand of him motehive. Mind of me all jagged now. Puny free within city law. To have mothive counter no law but I know this thing to mock.

Sadsweet this poor puny, all puny. Lose their world to us most easy. So mock is balm to puny and this motehive is mock. Rotate or one or many, such mock no jag to my mind. Mock is mirror to greatness. *We* talk of hive because hive our race beginning. As sea creature of puny we know by open and match. We fly not now, fur away, mindtouch only in couple, command, ban, lastloss. All race evolve, but *We* keep soulegg, race memory, therefore Hivename. No racelink to these moty. Dismindly jagged now I kicks-under hive and moty fly away.

Puny look up at me black. And in mesoul too all black. Againstself black now, ingrief for puny. I groan, Sing to me puny. I reach out to caress.

Yet more black he sing. Painsong, that one note *We* shiver at. Rotate or one, painsong touch balmtackle, two meet like great holy oncinmany of universe. But this rotate I feel only pain.

I take from belt high pink sugar precious from Hiveworld and uphold. Puny sing painsong on. I, againstself black more, beat him once about head. He scatter. I pass on.

Then faint behind me note and note. I hate to see that evening sun go down. My pet puny song. I even know word after word of. Little true mean I know, but note-soundwordssound great balm. Pain as in all onemany, but small pain. Small pain great balm. Small pain make great balm—holy high of onemany in balmworld.

Go back to puny. Puny from fold of bodyweave take

stringstick and pluck. Plucksing slow, singpluck sad. Ooze from universe walls great balm. Bathe me bathe me. Lift up soul, fly fly *yingen yingen* to most inheart of all, to first soulegg.

Sugar I shower and puny stop. On I cry and puny sing on. Puny look up, joypain on face. For am I sing too, thus puny joypain for I lack tackle. But I balm. Puny joypain only goodmock. My voice round punyword clumsy. But all balm.

Then holy onemany onemost be. And balm end as all balm for all creature howso they couple or call. Slow sad of afterbalm. Thank I say and pass on.

Voice of command.

To leader I.

Leader great sad.

Afterbalm I question.

Balmblack.

I afterbalm I say.

She rise from cradle. Balmblack afterbalm all one in lastloss. She stand, look out over green world. She *vahn*.

Yearn from Hiveworld I question.

Hiveworld yes. Thoughtban. This world think. Conquer now how many revolve? To what end? All loosing. Race-loss, *yingen* from Hive.

I know now not only in me this selfblack. Wenumberone mose ingrief. Selfblack over puny? I offer.

Haynn! Leadermind jagged. What puny to *We*, *We* to puny? If puny fade in last raceloss . . . *We* jagged? Tell me.

We all jagged, I say. Pain in our inheart. Lackfaith. Soul-shred.

Then we make lastloss of all. Then peace in our heart and no more pain for punyrace. No more pain in Most Inheart of all.

And She most jagged now. She——

"And there the record ends," said Rolf.

The face of the accused one moved in the light of the judgment flame.

"*This* you bring against me? This tortured translation of some script that Rolf has found among the ruins!"

"This is no translation. I read from the very script."

"It's a grotesque tongue. Clumsy and——"

An angry murmur rose from the gathered tribe.

Rolf smiled thinly and pityingly.

"I do not speak to condemn you. I am a scholar, interested only in the truth. It is obvious that this is the true tongue. It speaks of the Hiveworld and of the way of things then upon Earth. It speaks strong. It is we, descendants of the Great Ones, who speak a grotesque and debased tongue."

The white-haired Queen spoke now, addressing herself to the accused.

"Our faith is founded on truth and divine order. How other could it be than as Rolf has spoken?"

The accused struggled to find words. Then he stammered, "I have not had time to reason out this new-found fragment, but I say that it is part of a record made by one of that race that conquered us——"

The crowd roared in anger now. The Queen raised her hand for silence.

"No, let him speak. However painful his words may be. We know that he has murmured among us before, but he must be allowed to speak out now in defence of himself." She turned back to the accused. "Unless, that is, you elect to keep your silence from this time, accepting the proof of this script."

"The script is no proof. Only in pictures would be proof."

"You know that the Great Ones never made images. Wherefore to this day the making of images is unlawful. Do you not see how false your words are? If your heresy were true, then the script would be in some strange tongue. How do you explain this?"

"How can I explain something written many centuries ago? We speak the tongues of beast and bird to ensnare them. Perhaps it was a fancy of the writer. Who can tell? If there is proof in this script, then it is proof of what I say. Are there not words in it which the writer could not translate, words not in our tongue?"

"But Rolf has explained that. We have lost the words as the true Tongue has become corrupt on our lips."

"Then the joynoise that this record speaks of? The noise that was alien to the writer, what was that but the sound of laughter?"

The Queen looked sadly upon him. "And who laughs among us? Except crazy ones?"

And the answering roar of the crowd held no laughter in it.

The accused raised his voice above the clamour.

"Then we're all crazy. Don't you see! If you condemn me you are giving them the final victory. The victory even they no longer held precious, as the script shows. They were losing the will to survive. As we are by maintaining that we are their descendants. We're not. We are the Puny of this script, the true natives of——"

There were great cries of "Kill him! Kill him!" and a shrill voice rose above the clamour: "He seeks to take away our faith!"

The accused one's voice became a scream.

"I seek not to take it away but to restore it. Ours has been a false faith, nurtured in broken pride. I tell you, we are *Man*. Once we were great upon this Earth. We have a world to remake, to make great again. If we think only——"

His words were drowned utterly in the storm of anger about him. The Queen stood up, both arms raised. When the clamour died the accused too had fallen silent, his head bowed in resignation.

The Queen spoke.

"This is no time for anger, my brothers, only for pity. Take this crazed creature away and hurl him from the cliff. Then return speedily for the ceremony of purification."

The man was dragged away. Soon, from beyond the woods, came a last cry, dying into silence.

The men returned.

"Very well," said the Queen. "Let us speak the first verses of the Holy Text:

"In the beginning was wilderness, inhabited only by creatures of evil. Then came the Great Ones from beyond the stars who multiplied upon the face of the earth and put to flight the creatures of evil and built great cities.

“But, though the creatures of evil were overcome, yet their evil lived on, and after many a year calamity fell upon the Great Ones. Their cities fell into ruin and the Great Ones withered. We, lost souls, are their remnant.

“Yet in the Hiveworld the Great Ones still abide. Keep our hearts pure against the day of Their Coming. For surely they have not forgotten us, their lost children.”

A sound, half-whisper half-wailing, rose from the crowd.

“Now let us lift our eyes to the stars, to the Hiveworld, and stand in silent communion and prayer.”

After a long silence, terminated by a stomping of the Queen's staff, they dispersed back to their caves, their hearts eased by the purging of heresy from their midst.

Only one man was troubled, remembering an old man, a kin of his mother. *He had sung that song, a slow sad song. I hate to see that evening sun go down. I hate to see. . . .*

The man's lips moved as he remembered the tune. Strange that it should survive if it had been the song of a lesser race that had died.

Unless——

But he thrust the thought from his mind as he reached his cave. He took one last look at the stars and murmured piously, “Keep our hearts pure against the day of Their Coming,” before passing into the darkness beyond.

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signals

john calder

THE SIGNAL WAS stronger this time. For some months I had detected a blockage, an interference that appeared to come from some intelligent source, but it was being overcome by my friends on 647. I had been thinking of abandoning them altogether in view of the positive results of 291 and of 1143, particularly as we had now developed a relatively sophisticated language to communicate with the latter, but then our success had been so much greater with universes parallel to our own, and with one or two developed civilizations of the planet in which we are an atom, than with the worlds inside our own atoms, that my priorities were usually given to the latter. Professor Hrkz, my lamented mentor, who had died the previous year after more than a century of research into radio minibeams, never went in at all for the larger systems, and his principal preoccupation, after of course determining the mode of life of his receptionists as far as possible, was to try to determine the type of matter, moving or fixed, animal, mineral or vegetable that housed

the atom in question. I find that such information, although interesting, is irrelevant to our researches, much too time-consuming and too hypothesis-based for its results to be credible. Professor Hrkz claimed that the type of matter at any one time had a considerable influence on the development of the worlds within, but this idea belonged really to the period when it was widely believed that inhabitants of planets in the atoms of our system, and of those systems in which we are an atom, might possibly be on a similar time-scale to ourselves. We had found similar time-scales, both up and down, so to speak, but they were a rarity and proved nothing. 647 was however one such planet and up to about a year previously, far and away the most successful exchanger of signals of worlds of their size in contact with my laboratory.

The interference appeared to emanate from another part of the same atom, not necessarily from the same solar system, of which there appeared to be many. It came from an intelligent source and seemed to represent a hostility towards the signals emanating from 647, although it was possible that the senders of the blocking signal were trying themselves to make contact on the same signal, having detected the two-way exchange between ourselves and 647. The time-scale of 647 was fairly advanced in our terms, as we appeared, in the four years that we had been in contact, to have been communicating with only three generations of the senders, whose lives were estimated to be two years long in our time-scale. Now that we had found ways of compressing a ten-minute message into one ten-thousandth of a second there was no longer difficulty in transmitting in something very close to the receivers' time-scale once it was determined, but we had found it more difficult to detime the messages received, all very compressed and still full of ambiguities. Interatomic communication is still a very inexact science in spite of the very great amount of money put at our disposal by the regional government. The principal laboratories on Mars and Venus were in some ways ahead of us, and in particular Professor Mrzhklypf's team, which was even more heavily subsidised, and was to be congratulated on having contacted atoms two stages above us by relaying through 111, with whom

we have been in contact now for over fifty years. The Mars laboratory also benefited from the relative underpopulation of that planet and the smaller number of interfering local signals in the atmosphere. Nevertheless when in the next ten years we do succeed in physically breaking through into the magnetic field of 4, our brother atom in the molecular cluster to which we belong, the credit will lie principally with us. I shall have retired by then, perhaps my dust will be enriching the soil of Erda where I first was born, but being at the time of writing in good health for my age I hope to live a little longer than that, a year or two past the breakthrough which I have helped plan. But I digress.

647, on the morning in question, had emitted a very strong signal. We had been receiving through the night from 980, a planet in a parallel atom of another molecule of our matter, whose time was much greater than ours and who seemed unable to compress. In six hours we received a short, rather unimportant message, which was compressed and decoded by the computer into a short paragraph and a reply was off again in minutes. I forget the subject. Some meaningless demand for protection. There are romantic dreamers and power-mongers even in our own enlightened solar system, and other worlds that have developed to the point of communication with us cannot be all expected to have emerged from their dangerous periods of aggression, but one would have thought that interplanetary invasions would have been things of the past for such peoples. Certainly there was nothing we could do. And then 647 began coming in on number one receiver. It gained strength after the first few seconds and I, having just come into the laboratory and been asked to come directly to the interpretation room, began to monitor the signal. I was. I must admit, not in a good mood. My home life, as I have briefly mentioned elsewhere in these memoirs, had been undergoing a period of strain. An interatomic signals physonomist enjoys much prestige today, and every new development in his field is seized on rapidly by the organisational news services, especially those that cater for the scientific educational establishments. The result is that it is almost impossible to have much peace and quiet unless one's family co-operates in keeping the Press at bay. But when

one's own daughter, living with a popular broadcaster and journalist, was constantly trying to get tidbits of news to feed her current lover, and the rest of the Press, aware of this, were trying to prevent Mrl'n from jumping in first, by hounding me to distraction at home, it can become even more difficult to achieve privacy there than at work. And then my current woman—we had been together then for over two years, and I sometimes jokingly referred to her as my wife—liked to have her musical friends staying until all hours of the night, when I was trying (the best pleasures are the old-fashioned ones), not only to do some reading from print (I am one of the few men in my profession still to get pleasure from a library) but also to get some natural sleep. Pills are all very well, but there is no sleep like that derived from lying down after allowing oneself to become tired and recovering energy by the natural processes of the body. Although dreams have been discredited as a means of investigating the psyche, I enjoy them and I think my services to humanity justify my taking my pleasures according to my tastes. On top of which, I shouldn't be surprised if the official attitude to dreams is not discredited one of these days. I have been told I waste time and therefore much of my life. Well, let them say what they like. I have had three honours for my researches including the medal of the Universal Academy, and although Spzlechn may very well have succeeded me at the laboratory, being stronger in intrigue than in science, I couldn't even see him earning a second class Interplanetary Society Award. And so the irritations of home life had been growing. I had only had pilled sleep for six nights running, as Joanna and her friends insisted on going through the whole night with Beethoven and Krrzn quartets, all very pleasant to listen to, but I was unable to read, except by putting on silencers in the next room, and I do not like silence. I get enough of it in my work. I would have liked to sleep, but sleeping with silencers is not the same thing at all. Therefore my irritation. Also the sex business. I know that sex is meant to be unimportant at my age. Many people keep it up with stimulants, most don't bother any more. The young are not keen on sex with the old, and the old usually do not overly attract the old, and in any case an active sex life of eighty

years or so is enough for most people. But in my case, and I take no aphrodisiacs as I am not especially keen on having desires and assuaging them and so on, nature still returns and I think it is healthy not to suppress it. I had on occasion interrupted Joanna's chamber music to indulge in sex, but she says that it is very unfair to the players who had to wait for her return or continue with one part missing. She would say she preferred it in the afternoon and her fashion editing allowed her to get off for an hour or so then, but it was my busiest time and I was not going to give Spzlehn the satisfaction of saying that I seemed to be slowing down, perhaps I should take things more easily and just come in during the morning. So in brief, I had been neither quieting my still existing desires nor satisfying them, nor getting natural sleep, nor reading, nor doing much in the way of creative research outside the laboratory, and as far as I was concerned they could relegate Beethoven back to the nineteenth century and Krrzn back to wherever he came from. In particular the Grosse Fuge, which the violinist has never properly mastered, although it is an easy enough work to play today, grates increasingly on my ears and seems to be the most popular work in Joanna's repertory.

But in a few minutes my irritation had turned to excitement. It was definitely 647. The signal was not only getting stronger, but it had an added vibrancy that was being picked up by the colourer and turned into nearly comprehensive images. I went to the hypothesis computer that had already analysed the signal into seventy-seven different analytical structures and was now working out different theories of the meaning that was coming through. As I tore the analyses off, I felt the old power coming back. My fingers clicked quickly over the automatic thought recorder. Soon I had selected ten of the more likely theories and fed them back into the reanalyser for further digestion, while I concentrated on the giant transference screen. A pattern began to emerge and I saw dimly at first, but more clearly with every passing second, the little bald bow-legged creatures, their arms twice the length of their bodies, who were inside the drop of water that lay before me, a millimeter from the atomic needle that had isolated one atom

within the water and was receiving a communication from beings on a planet within that atom. The creatures were in a state of similar excitement to mine and that of the staff around me in the interpretation room. Their light was brightly coloured and slightly misty, their planet lush with rich tropical vegetation. There appeared to be birds, large brown birds circling overhead, but no, they came lower and appeared to be very like the creatures who were transmitting to us. They came lower, the others gesticulated, they dropped, and their wings folded into their backs. They were in fact the same species, flying men, near enough to our appearance to be thought of as men. The thought crossed my mind that one day there might be a sexual crossing with creatures such as these, but I smiled and dismissed the thought when I remembered the discrepancy in size. I calculated quickly how long it must have been since the last successful reception from 647. It had never been as clear as this. But they were trying to say something. I could feel the concentration as they tried to get a combined visual and thought image through the signal. The reanalysis came back, there were only two versions this time, and I concentrated again on the screen. Suddenly there was an interruption, and quickly I thought, it must be the hostile signal, but it was different this time, mocking, jocular, almost triumphant, and I could still see the creatures, smiling, concentrating, penetrating our world from theirs, enclosed in a universe that was part of a drop of clear crystalline water. They wanted me to know something, to see something. It had been six months since the last comprehensive signal, probably about fifty years had passed in their time-scale and during that time they had not only improved their signal, but had eliminated the opposition. It was obvious that the interruption had been intended to mock the other signal, that they had contrived to overcome it. They were holding something up. It appeared to be a head, it took three of them to lift it, and I looked at it with horror. It was like an enormous human head, lightly bearded, hirsute on top with eyes that were blue and open. Although severed from its trunk they had kept it alive so that I could see the eyes which looked at me with an expression of appeal, of fellow feeling, pleading a relationship. The little creatures

looked uglier than ever now, and I could see the cruel smiles in their long strangely shaped eyes. They had invaded the other planet. They had stopped the other signal. Had the other signal perhaps been trying to get through for help? What matter? Life so small, so brief. My own brain cells, my blood stream, contained an uncountable number of similar atoms, all of them at some stage in evolution, some of which might perhaps contact our world one day, thousands were probably contacting each other at this moment. Suddenly the signal stopped. I looked away from the screen. Spzychn with a motion of his hand had brushed the drop onto the floor. He hesitated a second as we all looked at him in astonishment, then left the room, the transparent door closing silently behind him. 647 would never broadcast to us again and my growing indignation at the waste of all our work was only slightly tempered by satisfaction at realising how right I had been to despise Spzlchn, who would never become head of the laboratory now.

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A TASTE OF THE AFTERLIFE

**CHARLES PLATT &
B. J. BAYLEY**

THE UNDERGROUND CORRIDORS were as cold and as bare as one expects the corridors of a government installation to be in wartime, in December. The icy dampness seemed to creep up my legs from the ground; our breath trailed frostily behind us; footsteps echoed in the confines of the heavy unpainted concrete walls, floor and ceiling.

I had little real idea of where I was going, or whom I was to see. I had been told as little as possible. Security, now more than ever before, had become something of an automatic habit. I knew the assignment would be something important for the war effort, though which war—Euro-Polar, Afro-American or Indo-Asian—was unclear. At this time, Britain had an uncertain part in each. Nations were sparring and shouting; in due course, the isolated bombing raids, that all leaders denied knowledge of, would escalate into full-scale attacks, and the threats would be backed up. But no one knew exactly how or where or when the really big push was going to come.

We were already on wartime rationing, and, increasingly, resources were being diverted to production of arms, aircraft, bio-sprays and protectives, ration packs and, of course, missiles. War was no longer a horrifying possibility; most of those who faced up to facts accepted it as an inevitable consequence. How each nation would survive was largely being determined in the strategy used in the preparations, the espionage, and the undercover making-and-breaking of treaties, alliances and pacts.

I viewed my impending assignment with a kind of fatalism. My record was sufficiently rich in variety of experience, however bare in achievement, for me to be singled out for the more unpleasant, less glamorous tasks that came up.

We stopped outside one of the many grey-painted doors, identified only by a roughly-stencilled number, and went inside, the two military police still keeping close either side of me.

The room was overcrowded; there were three desks in an area designed to accommodate two. The men at the desks were sitting in a haze of cigarette smoke, piles of reports and forms stacked haphazardly in any available

space. Their total involvement with the work was obvious. Only one of them glanced up as we came in ; he beckoned me quickly over towards him.

I cleared some papers off an old wooden chair and sat down in front of the desk. A nameplate on it identified him as H. Jones ; no indication of rank or position.

He finished writing something in front of him, pushed it down a disposal chute, then clasped his hands together over the desk top and examined my face. His eyes were a nondescript grey, set under thick eyebrows that looked incongruous against the bald dome of his head. His mouth was thin and wide, and when he talked it moved rapidly, incisively, spitting the words out. I remember being overcome by its resemblance to a trapdoor, and by the impassiveness of the rest of his face, only the grey eyes moving.

"Have you been given any briefing on this assignment?" he asked.

"Nothing at all."

He dropped his eyes to a note that one of his associates had placed on his desk, but continued talking.

"Then we'll start with the background, from the beginning. This information is security classification B—understood?" He went on talking, without allowing me time to answer. "You're a more important part of our war effort than you realise. Though don't let that give you any false sense of glory ; there are a large number of other men suitable for the job if you don't come up with what we want."

He paused for a moment to initial a report that had been passed to him, then continued. "About a month ago, in mid-November, we experienced several disabling attacks on various military targets: weapons factories, missile sites, radar units. There was nothing unusual in this ; the enemy's been engaged in this sort of warfare for the last three years."

My mind wandered ; I wondered which of our enemies he was referring to.

"We often manage to catch two or three of the saboteur gang," he went on, "and certainly there's always been evidence of how the attack was pulled off. But in these cases there were no traces of any kind ; electrical systems

had simultaneously short-circuited and blown up, generators had broken down, without there being any evidence of interference.

"Not unnaturally, we suspected some kind of long-range interference beam, possibly from one of the new series of Russian satellites. So on several potential targets—installations similar to those that had been attacked previously—a number of detection devices were installed. One of them picked up results."

At this point he stubbed out his cigarette and stood up, motioning me to do the same. I followed him out of the door and into the damp, cold, dimly-lit corridor. "One of the sites we'd bugged was hit within the next week," he went on. "But the only detector to react was the one we had least expected to come up with anything."

We walked to the end of the corridor and paused outside the last of the line of doors.

"You must realise we're in this war—make no mistake, it already *is* a war, no matter what the newspapers say—up to our necks, and fighting to stay alive." His grey eyes seemed to be studying me intently. "When you're in a battle like this, and all the time it looks like becoming a losing battle, you don't stop and argue over what you use and what you don't use. You grab hold of anything that comes along, and if it works, it's made use of right away, no questions asked. The detection device that gave results was unorthodox; we still only understand the general principles. The designer, who you'll be meeting in a moment, isn't orthodox either. But don't under-estimate him."

His eyes rested on my face a moment longer. Then, abruptly, he opened the door and walked in.

The room contained a variety of electronic gear, stacked along one wall. Opposite was a glass panel, behind which, in the adjacent room, several men were standing and talking in front of what looked like some kind of control console. Right in front of us was a white-sheeted table, of the kind you see in hospitals. I felt the beginnings of apprehension. To me, external dangers—bullets, explosives, even poisons—are always less frightening and less unknown than the surgeon's attack from within. The fact that the table

looked unlike a conventional operating table was even more disquieting.

Jones led me over to a middle-aged man in a dark, slightly shabby suit partly covered by a laboratory coat. He was standing in the corner of the room, making adjustments to a piece of equipment, as we approached.

"This is Fairweather, the volunteer, Dr. Cartwright." The blue-suited man turned to face me. He was tall and thin, and his skin seemed to have dried up into many little wrinkles. He wore thick-rimmed, thick-lensed glasses. We shook hands. His palm was rough and dry to the touch.

"I'll let Dr. Cartwright describe the technical aspect, Fairweather," Jones said to me. He seated himself on a chair near the door, where he sat watching us.

Dr. Cartwright looked me over. "You're the . . . ah . . . volunteer," he said.

"I was chosen for the assignment," I said. Cartwright seemed to miss the distinction. He appeared to be vaguely preoccupied by something, to the exclusion of the outside world. When he talked to me, I felt he was finding the phrasing of each sentence an effort.

"You've been filled in on the background?" he said.

"I've been told that your equipment detected something during attacks on an installation. I haven't been told the nature of the discovery."

Cartwright stood, staring at the floor in silence, chewing at his lower lip. I waited for him to speak. At last, he looked up and cleared his throat.

"We found an unusual form of electromagnetic activity," he said. "It acted as if with some kind of intelligence or purpose. There were nodes and contours of the field strength that we could define and measure."

"What does that mean, exactly?" I asked, trying to bring him to the point.

"It led to some guesses, and some conclusions which were unacceptable, until verified by later trials."

I waited for him to go on. He seemed reluctant.

"When a man dies, we have discovered that there is in fact a form of afterlife. He survives, in a modified form, as a mobile intelligence; I've described it as electromagnetic because that is the only facet of it that we can detect

at present. But clearly such self-contained field entities could not exist on quite so elementary a level, and other forces are involved."

He paused, looked around the room, then at his watch. "Everything seems to be in order. We have ten minutes before we start the transformation. The enemy's method of attack was made using these field entities—Afterlifers is our provisional code term. Being intangible electromagnetic beings, their disablement of electrical apparatus, leaving no obvious evidence of sabotage, is easily understood. The enemy is liable to gain a great advantage using afterlifers, unless we retaliate."

"Just a moment," I broke in. "You call them 'Afterlifers'; you're referring to intelligences surviving from dead men?"

Cartwright shrugged. "Afterlifers is a convenient term. Now, what I'm about to tell you will come as a shock, but I'm told that your personality profile will react favourably. You must realise, as we all do, that this stage of the war is vital. Faulty strategy now could mean the obliteration of the country within the first month of full-scale hostilities. It's no good protesting about the situation, hoping for peace. One has to face facts and take action before it's too late."

"I appreciate this," I said.

"Your assignment is to aid our ground forces, as an afterlife energy form, in their impending attack on a foreign-based military installation. In the afterlifer state you will be able to disrupt electrical equipment of the installation and aid our forces in overcoming the enemy. I regret that, as yet, there is no known procedure for releasing the field-entity—the 'afterlifer'—from your physical body, other than by termination of your terrestrial life. These are early stages, you understand, and . . ."

"Are you serious?" I said. My voice, I was aware, had risen in pitch.

He looked at me calmly. "There is very little to concern yourself about. Your . . . death . . . will be painless. And you must remember that it is not, in fact, a death. It is a transition from one state of existence to another. We will supply you with weapons, converted into electromagnetic form, for defence against enemy afterlife forces. There is evidence that on its release from the body, the afterlifer is

immediately thrust upwards by mutual repulsion with the earth's magnetic field ; we will supply you with a propulsor, to counteract this effect. Also there is a simple communications device. Afterlife field entities can control electrical devices. You will be able to use the communicator for transmission of messages in simple Morse code."

Their technique was clever ; by piling up information, occupying my mind, Cartwright had produced in me a state where I had not really accepted or digested the facts of the situation—that transition to afterlife form involved death. In a simple sense, I had not been given time to think.

"Our only remaining problem," Jones broke in, "is that the different circumstances and environment, after the transition, might influence your loyalty. However, Dr. Cartwright's experience is reassuring. The afterlifer seems to retain a form of consciousness, and to think, reason and react in the same way as a human being. Knowing how many million innocent citizens of the free world are depending on you, I feel confident of your patriotism."

He stood up and walked over to me, unfolding a chart.

"This details the underground arms manufacturing plan at Omsk ; you were familiarised with it in training. We are planning complete disablement of the control systems, the attack to take place tonight at 2330. That's about ten hours away. As a field entity you will have no trouble in penetrating straight through to the installation ; you will assist our forces in any way possible. Understood?"

I nodded.

"Ten hours is ample time for you to reach the location, once an afterlife entity," Cartwright said. "Absence of air resistance, and so on, makes the propulsor we are providing a very efficient form of power. Now, here are your weapons, the communicator, and the propulsor. They will phase into electromagnetic state a few moments before you undergo transformation yourself. Remember to grab them at once, before repulsion of the magnetic field lifts you clear." He placed the gadgets in compartments at the sides of the white table, and motioned me to lie down on it. Dumbly, almost as if in a trance, I complied. He lowered a wide, shallow hood on wires from the ceiling, to within about six inches of my body. It was as if it were totally

unreal; I had retained the information given to me, and understood it, yet somehow none of it really made sense.

I looked up and saw Jones and Dr. Cartwright standing over me. "This assignment is vital in the outcome of the war," Jones said, "otherwise we wouldn't be taking these measures. You're carrying an immense responsibility for human life, and we rely on you to give this assignment all you've got."

"You're only the fifth man to be used in this equipment," Cartwright said, making adjustments. "You'll be posthumously decorated. A great honour."

Then I was aware of their footsteps disappearing, presumably into the control room. A door closed. I waited. It was only in the final seconds that my airy detachment, which I still find hard to understand, wore off, and I really understood for the first time that they were going to kill me. I reacted instinctively, trying to raise myself on my elbows and pull myself free, but by then, of course, it was too late. My last impression was of a burning, jarring surge of high voltage, rippling across me in a giant shock wave. A moment of unbearable pain.

Then the transition occurred, quite suddenly. Blackness. Then gradually a different kind of perception opened up, replacing all the ordinary senses. I sensed the colours of objects, as in ordinary vision; but I began to sense, also, their texture, their smell, and other properties which are hard to describe. And, like hearing, the perception was omnidirectional; I perceived behind and above me as easily as in front and to either side. It was a kind of exploded consciousness.

Feeling myself pulling gently free of the flesh of my old body, I remembered what Cartwright had said and grabbed the gadgets he had placed beside the table. Converted into field-energy forms, they were almost unrecognisable.

I rose in the room, and saw my body on the table, with vague feelings of detachment. I saw the men walk out of the control room and wheel the body away. I rose up through the granite in which the installation was buried, towards the surface. Solid matter was no obstruction at all, and similarly I could exert no control over it. I grasped

the propulsor, aimed it downwards, and accelerated my travel upwards.

Soon I was some distance above England. The senses in my new 'body' were quite different from those of the old one, and readjustment took time. As I practised, my perception improved. I saw the magnetic field as a hazy, shimmering, rainbow-like mist over the land below, ranging from a deep, dark red near the ground to a sky that was violet-black. The horizon flickered in bands of green, blue and red, similar to Northern Lights, but vastly more vivid and intense. I drifted on upwards and tried to make sense of the scene around and below me.

I saw other figures, afterlifers like myself, the newly dead, drifting upwards here and there. They resembled amoebas in their formlessness. I studied myself. Magnetic lines of force gave the erroneous impression of being nerve fibres; electrically charged portions of my body shone in a variety of translucent colours. It was a wonderful and exciting experience in perception.

I entered the ionosphere, and here, in the turbulent, electrically charged region of the atmosphere, my surroundings took on a more definite appearance. Charged layers were like solid surfaces to the touch. Shifting corridors and halls opened up before me, and vanished the next instant. The colours were dazzling. As my altitude increased, the surroundings stabilised to some extent. I arrested my upward motion by applying the propulsor.

I tried to review, objectively, events that had so far occurred. The transition from human being to electromagnetic being was both as painful, and yet as natural, as being born; my mind had accepted the state, and seemed unchanged in its functions.

I took hold of the communicator, feeling that I ought to report back. I could not escape mixed feelings about the termination of my normal life. There was the inescapable suspicion that afterlife was not as real, not as important; that there were things in my last life left undone, opportunities missed . . .

I looked down at the surface of the earth. Death had always seemed an easy way out, and now, in a way, I could see how easy it really was. To be free from wartime poli-

tics and manoeuvring was undeniably pleasant. But it was still true that I owe my ex-countrymen some kind of obligation or duty. I remembered Jones referring to the millions of innocent people depending on my actions. Over-dramatised, but, in a sense, true.

I examined the communicator and found it easy to comprehend its principles. Comprehension was instinctive rather than deductive. Letter by letter I broadcast in Morse a message to the effect that I was proceeding as planned.

I used the propulsor to lower my altitude and under its force was soon drifting across the English Channel. I had ample time for assimilation of my environment and for some quiet thought. I could not feel entirely detached from humanity, perhaps because to a large extent I still thought and acted as a human being. The senses of perception and of time were both altered to some extent, but consciousness and logical functions remained the same.

I headed eastwards, along the coast of France, which lay several thousand feet beneath. I was unable to feel detached or entirely alien from the land below me. I could still imagine the people, and still clearly see myself as one of them. And I could still follow the indisputable logic of games theory, politics and counter-aggression which had inevitably led to the present conflict escalating towards declaration of war.

I was still *me*—the same person that had been through two-year military training, the same person who had been instructed in the true nature of patriotism and of the ideologies of the various aggressors menacing the free world.

Several hours later, I operated the communicator again, and informed them of my position over the Communist border. I used the propulsor gradually to decelerate and reduce my altitude, which took some considerable time.

Deep in the mistiness of the magnetic field, close to the ground, movement became impaired, and the uniform reddish haze interfered with my perception. I crossed darkened cities, and saw solitary air raid wardens and military police personnel patrolling the streets. Though I realised that it was now night-time, the darkness hardly affected most of my perceptive faculties.

Once I almost collided with another afterlife being. I was sweeping over rooftops at what must have been nearly a hundred miles an hour, when the shadowy figure drifted up in front of me, fresh from the body of someone newly-dead, and I sensed its surprise and distress as I narrowly missed it. I looked back and saw it soaring up into the night, still staring down at me.

Otherwise, my trip was uneventful. Using my night flying experience, I followed landmarks I knew lay on a rough route to Omsk. When almost at my destination, I swooped low and settled near an air raid warden, managing to peer at his wrist watch. There was half an hour before the attack was scheduled to begin. I drifted up away from him; it was unsettling to be in close proximity with a human being when he could not detect my presence. My tenuous "body" had touched him once or twice, penetrating the cloth of his uniform without difficulty.

I remembered the location of the installation from Jones' map and from my training. One of the largest of the Soviet weapons factories, it was undoubtedly of great importance in their war effort. Set deep in the side of a mountain, it had until now been considered impregnable from the point of view of attack by ground forces. Conventional bombing, also, would have little effect. (At this stage, the war had not escalated as far as to involve the use of nuclear weapons).

But with the assistance of afterlife beings, I saw that the attack would be relatively easy.

I entered the access tunnel, filtering effortlessly through concrete and rock, and located the first guard post. I stood in the midst of the men, as they sat in the guard room, talking, drinking a little, swapping stories. They were rough types, and the room was ugly and bare, its walls and ceiling of bare rock, its uneven floor made of hastily-poured concrete. Yet the feeling of loss, of my inability to be one of them in human form, was great. I envied them. I drifted around and through one or two of them, but the only noticeable response was when the electrical field surrounding my form had the effect of raising their hair slightly, an effect similar to static electricity.

I found their control unit, which governed much of the defence equipment in the installation. Experimenting cau-

tiously, I found it easy to divert and manipulate the electricity. I systematically short-circuited the weapons systems and extinguished the warning lights before they had time to light up. It was extremely simple. I watched the clock on the wall at one end of the room, and a few moments before 2330 I bridged switches controlling remote operation of the massive steel doors that sealed the installation off from the outside world.

The rumble of their opening shook through the floor and walls, and the men jumped up, startled. One ran over to the control panel, but I had disabled it sufficiently subtly so that all appeared normal. Experimenting, I found I could divert electric current to each of his hands ; he moaned and crumpled up on the floor, and I watched, struck dumb, as the afterlife entity dragged itself free from his corpse and, very slowly at first, drifted upwards. It saw me and made futile attacking gestures, but soon it had disappeared up through the ceiling of the room.

From the entrance passage outside I heard the sound of gunfire. Quickly I propelled myself outside to see what had happened.

The guards were fighting back against our attacking force, which had dug in at either side of the now-open tunnel. Swiftly I drifted across to the enemy, untroubled by the explosions and the bullets, and found a power point in the wall. Somehow—I was continually astonished at the abilities of my new form, which I seemed to be able to exercise almost instinctively—I ionised thin streamers of air which became sufficiently conductive to convey painful shocks to the Russian guards. The streamers glowed eerily in the passage ; it was enough to unnerve them. I suppose our attacking force had been instructed that they would find afterlifer assistance ; at any rate, they advanced, showing only momentary surprise at the phenomenon.

Most of the guards were killed, and I found it unsettling to watch the afterlifers rise from each one, silvery streamers of faint luminescence that drifted upwards through the rock of the mountain and, eventually, out into the still night air. The attacking force penetrated deep into the heart of the installation, and I heard distant sounds of explosions and

shouts as, no doubt, they successfully wrecked equipment and machinery. But I remained near the tunnel entrance.

The afterlife world is basically one of complete peace. The fact that as an afterlifer one can only affect one's environment in relatively indirect ways leads to a sense of serene detachment. Such sensations as pain, physical touch, heat and cold are difficult to remember from one's former state. Even gravity exerts no force upon the afterlifer, heightening the impression of being in a totally non-physical mode of existence.

Lack of direct sensory ("touch") impressions, combined with a more striking and subtle semi-optical view of the world, inevitably leads to a more detached viewpoint. For me, the greatest shock had been seeing afterlifers rise from the dead Russian guards. Whereas, in physical terrestrial life, I had never been especially struck by the fact that the enemy was a human being like myself, I was overcome by the fact that the afterlife beings from newly-dead enemies could have no cause for aggression against me. The motives of war make sense only when applied to physical entities in the real world. Though the afterlifers drifting up from the men I had helped to kill thought, believed and reasoned in the same way as when they had existed within living flesh, I could find no reason, in the tenuous afterlife world, to feel antagonism towards them.

I drifted to the tunnel entrance and looked out from the hillside over the town, some distance away. I could hear the sound of approaching vehicles; no doubt the noise of the attack, or an automatic alarm system, had alerted other troops. The occasional flash of light was visible, from the headlamps of the approaching forces.

I operated my propulsor and drifted down the hill towards them, contemplating simple disablement of the vehicles' electrical systems. But I stopped when a fascinating, unexpected sight caught my eye, over by the town.

From one building, ten or fifteen afterlifers drifted simultaneously upwards, specks of luminescence in the dark night. They began drifting towards me, and instinctively, at first, I put this down to there being a strong wind. I then remembered with something of a shock, that, as my

own experience had shown, air, like all other terrestrial matter, could exert no force upon the afterlife being.

As they approached more and more swiftly, the conclusion became obvious. The enemy, ahead of us in development of afterlife utilisation, had already got as far as basing small forces of afterlifers in various parts of the country, equipped with weapons and propulsors. I had every reason to expect the onrushing group to be a retaliatory force, armed and ready to defend the installation.

I set my propulsor to its maximum force and accelerated away from them; but, having been moving under power for some time, they had an advantage of speed that was inescapable.

I drifted up, gaining slightly from the natural repulsion of the earth's magnetic field, but the gap between us closed. I grasped the communicator and tapped out a brief message to the effect that afterlife forces were about to attack me; and then, as I soared towards the upper regions of the atmosphere, I had time to take in my surroundings once more.

The light of dawn was faintly visible on one horizon, spreading slowly over the land below. The sun was still concealed, but streamers of light and electrical discharges shot high into the dark sky. The sun's outer disturbances are far more vivid when observed in the electromagnetic spectrum; rainbow-like bands of orange and green spread out above the horizon, shimmering and glittering like stardust. Not far above me, now, the ionosphere shifted and swirled in response to the dawn bombardment of high-energy particles from the sun, the rippling surfaces were like incredibly fast moving, multi-coloured clouds.

I looked down at the attacking force, closing in, and felt only regret that my enjoyment of the afterlife world should be stopped so soon. I had no doubt that their weapons were permanently destructive—that there would, this time, be no further life after death. It should, in fact, be easier to totally disrupt an afterlifer, in its force-field form, than to have the same effect on a human being.

I vaguely thought of using my own weapons against them, but it hardly seemed worth the effort. A great tranquility

and a philosophical feeling of *laissez-faire* had settled on me ; I felt completely detached.

There was time for a last impression of the afterlife world around me, before I felt their weapons focus in and invoke total disruption, powerful shafts of electrical energy decomposing my tenuous form and breaking the weak bonds which held it together.

Awakening was painful and for a while there was only complete disorientation. There was no sense of conscious self-identification ; the word "me", was meaningless. Time sense was lost. Over a period of seconds or days, I gradually learnt the distinction between myself, and the world around me. Eventually, consciousness and abstract thought became possible. I began to make sense of, and interpret, sounds.

I opened my eyes.

Was this afterlife? Clearly the experiment had failed in some way ; I saw Dr. Cartwright standing over me—I was in some kind of hospital bed—with Jones in the background. Painfully, I managed to remember the events before my blackout: entering the room with the white-sheet-covered table, talking to the two men, and then lying down and suddenly feeling a great jolt of electrical energy that was to transform my consciousness into the form of an afterlifer.

But I remembered nothing more. And now I was here, in normal flesh and body, presumably having survived the shock that was to have "killed" me.

"The experiment . . . didn't work?" I managed to say, through a dry throat, to the white-coated figure of Dr. Cartwright.

"Good. Logical thought seems unimpaired," I heard him say quietly to Jones, who nodded. Then Cartwright turned back to me. "The experiment was successful," he said. "Your consciousness underwent an excellent transformation into the afterlife. In that form, you assisted in the attack on the installation as planned. We received one final report from you, before enemy afterlifer forces closed in on you and, as far as we can tell, destroyed your afterlife form completely."

I digested the information slowly. It was as though he was talking about someone else ; I had no memory of anything since the pseudo-death I had experienced on the white-sheet-covered table.

"I'll explain everything to you now," Cartwright went on, "though it'll be hard to comprehend at first. You weren't told everything, when briefed before transformation. In fact yours was the first case where we attempted *more* than a simple transformation of consciousness into afterlife form. This time, we subjected you to an electrical jolt of an intensity and pattern that had the effect of disrupting the nervous system, causing cessation of all motor functions, respiration and heart action. This was sufficient to release the afterlife form, which is, you realise, a residual field-entity with the same connectivity as one's nervous system.

"However, no *physical* damage was done to the body by the electrical jolt. It was left drained of all nervous energy ; but the 'raw material', so to speak, was still there. Working fast, we restored you to a state of normal physical functioning. Conscious thought, normal motor impulses and so on also gradually returned, after a period of about a week."

He stopped talking while a nurse came up and gave me an injection. I hardly noticed ; my body was strangely numb, all over. And I was trying to make sense of what Cartwright was saying.

"But if an afterlifer is, in a way, an analogue of a man's soul . . ."

"Nothing of the kind. That's just religious nonsense. An afterlifer is, as far as we can tell, a pseudo-electromagnetic field entity that maintains the connectivities of the nervous system of a living person, including those of the brain. Providing that the flesh of the body, from which an afterlifer has been driven, is left intact, there is no reason why treatment shouldn't re-establish the minute currents which enable the operation and conscious thought of a human being."

I shut my eyes. The man's voice was monotonous. All it meant was that they could extract and use someone's afterlife form, without the man irrevocably dying. It enabled a sophisticated kind of resuscitation.

"The attack on the installation," I said. "Was it successful?"

"Only partially," Jones replied. "In your afterlife form you successfully disabled one guard position, before, we assume, enemy afterlife forces overcame you. But our men came up against a second guard, further in the installation, and there was only one survivor. He radioed back this information."

The news was depressing. "Then our country is now in a very bad strategic position."

"Not at all. Our plans were immediately modified to integrate the new situation with our strategy and, though heavier reliance has been placed on the success of other sorties, as it happens the position is if anything slightly better than before the failure of your mission."

"But I understood my assignment was vital . . ."

"So it was, at the time. But there are many interrelated factors, all of them changing. It's very difficult . . . Anyway, Fairweather, we're expecting you to be back on your feet in a few days' time, and you can learn all about the new situation then. We have an assignment of extreme urgency and importance and we feel that, on the basis of your past afterlife performance, you are the best man we can use for this operation."

Once again, I tried slowly to understand what was being said.

"But I have no experience of being an afterlifer. My last memory is of the electric shock on the operating table."

Cartwright smiled. "We realise that. But you are still the same man, Fairweather. You have the same personality makeup. So there is good reason to suspect that, should we transform your consciousness into afterlife form again, it would react to the situation just as well as it did last time."

I sighed. I saw their plan, now. I visualised an endless succession of short periods in this sterile hospital ward, recuperating; followed again by the release of my consciousness in afterlife form. Then once more a revival from the pseudo-death, and a restoration of my consciousness . . . The process could continue all my physical life, an endless liberation of duplicate afterlife entities.

Cartwright and Jones exchanged glances. "We hadn't

intended to let you know, this early on, that we planned to use you in afterlife form in the future," Jones said. "The idea probably seems disquieting. But you must realise that being able to resuscitate men again in physical form, after release of their afterlife entities, is very valuable to us; we can maintain a small number of men out of combat duty and, using them, can accumulate a large afterlife force quite quickly. In fact we have reason to believe the . . . ah . . . enemy, has not yet perfected this technique."

I nodded weakly.

"Don't feel too badly about it," Cartwright said. "Remember, you're quite safe from combat duty while we're using you in this way. And yet in various afterlife forms you will be winning battle honours in enemy territory. Almost an ideal situation to be in."

I realised that, in a way, he had a point. It was the emotional reaction that caused me to feel so depressed; the idea of dying again and again, for one's country—of being used, as it were. But logically, of course, death had no meaning, in that sense. I would be just as alive at the end of it as at the beginning.

"There's one other thing," Jones said. He brought out a little case, like a jewellery box, and opened it. It contained a distinguished service medal. He placed it on my bedside table. "As the first man to volunteer for this process, your courage has been suitably rewarded."

Despite the falseness of the situation, I could not help but feel just a little proud. I examined the medal. It was a little cheaply made, but then, economy of materials was inevitable in wartime.

"That's that then," said Jones. "I'm glad you've taken this so well, Fairweather. We were informed that your personality profile would respond favourably, of course; but that's never infallible. Dr. Cartwright and I will be back in a few days' time, when you're on your feet again."

They walked out of the hospital ward.

I lay in the bed, contemplating what I had been told. I saw at once that Jones was right—that using a small force of men to generate a large number of afterlifers was likely to give us a big advantage in afterlife forces, if the enemy hadn't yet perfected this technique. And it was true, too,

that I would be getting the best of both worlds—quiet hospital life, plus the battle honours won by the parts of me released in afterlife form.

With any luck this would give our country just the edge it needed to come out well in the final hostilities—though, of course, no one could say exactly when these were going to break out. They might be three, or even five, years away.

Perhaps I was accepting the situation too easily; but when one has no choice in the matter, and one can see the logic of the strategy involved, one quickly learns the senselessness of trying to fight authority. In any case, there is the fact that millions of innocent lives depend on one's actions.

As drowsiness slipped over me and I began to fall asleep, I speculated as to the nature of my next mission. Jones had said that it was to be of extreme urgency and importance.

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the atrocities exhibition

J. G. Ballard

Apocalypse. A disquieting feature of this annual exhibition—to which the patients themselves were not invited—was the marked preoccupation of the paintings with the theme of world cataclysm, as if these long-incarcerated patients had sensed some seismic upheaval within the minds of their doctors and nurses. As Catherine Austen walked around the converted gymnasium these bizarre images, with their fusion of Eniwetok and Luna Park, Freud and Elizabeth Taylor, reminded her of the slides of exposed spinal levels in Travis's office. They hung on the enamelled walls like the codes of insoluble dreams, the keys to a nightmare in which she had begun to play a more willing and calculated role. Primly she buttoned her white coat as Dr. Nathan approached, holding his gold-tipped cigarette to one nostril. "Ah, Dr. Austen . . . What do you think of them? I see there's War in Hell."

Notes Towards a Mental Breakdown. The noise from the ciné-films of induced psychoses rose from the lecture theatre below Travis's office. Keeping his back to the window behind his desk, he assembled the terminal documents he had collected with so much effort during the previous month: (1) Contour map of underground bunkers, RSG 4, Berkshire; (2) Front elevation of balcony units, Hilton Hotel, London; (3) Pyramidal Cell cross-section, Rudolf Hoess, commandant of Auschwitz; (4) "Chronograms", by E. J. Marcy; (5) Photograph taken at noon, August 7, 1945, of the sand-sea, Qattara Depression; (6) Reproduction of Salvador Dali's "The Great Masturbator"; (7) Fusing sequences for "Big Boy" and "Fat Boy", Hiroshima and Nagasaki A-bombs. When he had finished Travis turned to the window. As usual, the white Pontiac had found a place in the crowded parking lot directly below him. The two occupants watched him through the tinted windshield.

Internal Landscapes. Controlling the tremor in his left hand, Travis studied the thin-shouldered man sitting opposite him. Through the transom the light from the empty corridor shone into the darkened office. His face was partly hidden by the peak of his flying cap, but Travis recognised the bruised features of the bomber pilot whose photographs, torn from the pages of *Newsweek* and *Paris-Match*, had been strewn around the bedroom of the shabby hotel in Earls Court. His eyes stared at Travis, their focus sustained only by a continuous effort. For some reason the planes of his face failed to intersect, as if their true resolution took place in some as yet invisible dimension, or required elements other than those provided by his own character and musculature. Why had he come to the hospital, seeking out Travis among the thirty physicians? Travis had tried to speak to him, but the tall man made no reply, standing by the instrument cabinet like a tattered mannequin. His immature but at the same time aged face seemed as rigid as a plaster mask. For months Travis had seen his solitary figure, shoulders hunched inside the flying jacket, in more and more newsreels, as an extra in war films, and then as a patient in an elegant ophthalmic film

on nystagmus—the series of giant geometric models, like sections of abstract landscapes, had made him uneasily aware that their long-delayed confrontation would soon take place.

The Weapons Range. Travis stopped the car at the end of the lane. In the sunlight he could see the remains of the outer perimeter fence, and beyond this a rusting quonset and the iron-stained roofs of the bunkers. He crossed the ditch and walked towards the fence, within five minutes found an opening. A disused runway moved through the grass. Half-concealed by the sunlight, the camouflage patterns across the complex of towers and bunkers four hundred yards away revealed half-familiar contours—the model of a face, a posture, a neural interval. A unique event would take place here. Without thinking, Travis murmured: “Elizabeth Taylor.” Abruptly there was a blare of sound above the trees.

Dissociation: Who laughed at Nagasaki? Travis ran across the broken concrete to the perimeter fence. The helicopter plunged towards him, engine roaring through the trees, its fans churning up a storm of leaves and paper. Twenty yards from the fence Travis stumbled among the coils of barbed wire. The helicopter was banking sharply, the pilot crouched over the controls. As Travis ran forward the shadows of the diving machine flickered around him like cryptic ideograms. Then the craft pulled away and flew off across the bunkers. When Travis reached the car, holding the torn knee of his trousers, he saw the young woman in the white dress walking down the lane. Her disfigured face looked back at him with indulgent eyes. Travis started to call to her, but stopped himself. Exhausted, he vomited across the roof of the car.

Serial Deaths. During this period, as he sat in the rear seat of the Pontiac, Travis was preoccupied by his separation from the normal tokens of life he had accepted for so long. His wife, the patients at the hospital (resistance agents in the “world war” he hoped to launch) his undecided affair with Catherine Austen—these became as

fragmentary as the faces of Elizabeth Taylor and Sigmund Freud on the advertising hoardings, as unreal as the war the film companies had re-started in Viet Nam. As he moved deeper into his own psychosis, whose onset he had recognised during his year at the hospital, he welcomed this journey into a familiar land, zones of twilight. *At dawn, after driving all night, they reached the suburbs of Hell. The pale flares from the petrochemical plants illuminated the wet cobbles. No one would meet them there.* His two companions, the bomber pilot at the wheel in the faded flying suit and the beautiful young woman with radiation burns, never spoke to him. Now and then the young woman would look round at him with a faint smile on her deformed mouth. Deliberately, Travis made no response, hesitant to commit himself into her hands. Who were they, these strange twins, couriers from his own unconscious? For hours they drove through the endless suburbs of the city. The hoardings multiplied around them, walling the streets with giant replicas of napalm bombings in Viet Nam, the serial deaths of Elizabeth Taylor and Marilyn Monroe terraced in the landscapes of Dien Bien Phu and the Mekong Delta.

Casualties Union. At the young woman's suggestion, Travis joined the CU, and with a group of thirty housewives practised the simulation of wounds. Later they would tour with Red Cross demonstration teams. Massive cerebral damage and abdominal bleeding in automobile accidents could be imitated within half an hour, aided by the application of suitable coloured resins. Convincing radiation burns required careful preparation, and might involve some three to four hours of make-up. Death, by contrast, was a matter of lying prone. Later, in the apartment they had taken overlooking the zoo, Travis washed the wounds off his hands and face. This curious pantomime, overlaid by the summer evening stench of the animals, seemed performed solely to pacify his two companions. In the bathroom mirror he could see the tall figure of the pilot, his slim face with its lost eyes hidden below the peaked cap, and the young woman in the white dress watching him from the lounge. Her intelligent face, like that of a student, occasionally

showed a sudden nervous reflex of hostility. Already Travis found it difficult not to think of her continuously. When would she speak to him? Perhaps, like himself, she realised that his instructions would come from other levels?

Pirate Radio. There were a number of secret transmissions to which Ransom listened: (1) medullary: images of dunes and craters, pools of ash that contained the terraced faces of Freud, Eatherly and Garbo; (2) thoracic: the rusting shells of U-Boats beached in the cove at Tsingtao, near the ruined German forts where the Chinese guides smeared bloody handprints on the caisson walls; (3) sacral: VJ-Day, the bodies of Japanese troops in the paddy fields at night. The next day, as he walked back to Shanghai, the peasants were planting rice among the swaying legs. Memories of others than himself, together these messages moved to some kind of focus. The dead face of the bomber pilot hovered by the door, projection of World War III's unknown soldier. His presence exhausted Travis.

Marey's Chronograms. Dr. Nathan passed the illustration across his desk to Margaret Travis. "Marey's Chronograms are multiple-exposure photographs in which the element of time is visible—the walking human figure, for example, represented as a series of dune-like lumps." Dr. Nathan accepted a cigarette from Catherine Austen, who had sauntered forward from the incubator at the rear of the office. Ignoring her quizzical eye, he continued: "Your husband's brilliant feat was to reverse the process. Using a series of photographs of the most commonplace objects—this office, let us say, a panorama of New York skyscrapers, the naked body of a woman, the face of a catatonic patient—he treated them as if they already were chronograms and *extracted* the element of time." Dr. Nathan lit his cigarette with care. "The results were extraordinary. A very different world was revealed. The familiar surroundings of our lives, even our smallest gestures, were seen to have totally altered meanings. As for the reclining figure of a film star, or this hospital . . ."

"Was my husband a doctor, or a patient?" Dr. Nathan nodded sagely, glancing over his fingertips at Catherine Austen. What had Travis seen in those time-filled, forbidding eyes? "Mrs. Travis, I'm not sure if the question is valid any longer. These matters involve a relativity of a very different kind. What we are concerned with now are the implications—in particular, the complex of ideas and events represented by World War III. Not the political and military possibility, but the inner identity of such a notion. For us, perhaps, World War III is now little more than a sinister pop-art display, but for your husband it has become an expression of the failure of his psyche to accept the fact of its own consciousness, and of his revolt against the present continuum of time and space. Dr. Austen may disagree, but it seems to me that his intention is to start World War III, though not, of course, in the usual sense of the term. The blitzkriegs will be fought out on the spinal battlefields, in terms of the postures we assume, of our traumas mimetised in the angle of a wall or balcony."

Zoom Lens. Dr. Nathan stopped. Reluctantly, his eyes turned across the room to the portrait camera mounted on its tripod by the consulting couch. How could he explain to this sensitive and elusive woman that her own body, with its endlessly familiar geometry, its landscapes of touch and feeling, was their only defence against her husband's all-too-plain intentions? Above all, how could he invite her to pose for what she would no doubt regard as a set of obscene photographs?

The Skin Area. After their meeting, at the exhibition of war wounds at the Royal Society of Medicine's new conference hall, Travis and Catherine Austen returned to the apartment overlooking the zoo. In the lift Travis avoided her hands as she tried to embrace him. He led her into the bedroom. Mouth pursed, she watched as he showed her the set of Enneper's models. "What are they?" She touched the interlocking cubes and cones, mathematical models of pseudo-space. "Fusing sequences, Catherine—for a doomsday weapon." Later, the sexual act between them became a hasty eucharist of the angular dimensions of the apartment.

In the postures they assumed, in the contours of thigh and thorax, Travis explored the geometry and volumetric time of the bedroom, and later of the parabolic dome of the Festival Hall, the jutting balconies of the London Hilton, and lastly of the abandoned weapons range. Here the rectilinear and circular target areas became identified in Travis's mind with the concealed breasts of the young woman with radiation burns. Searching for her, he and Catherine Austen drove around the darkening countryside, lost among the labyrinth of hoardings. The faces of Sigmund Freud and Jeanne Moreau presided over their last bitter hours.

Neoplasm. Later, escaping from Catherine Austen, and from the forbidding figure of the bomber pilot, who now watched him from the roof of the lion house, Travis took refuge in a small suburban house among the reservoirs of Staines and Shepperton. He sat in the empty sitting-room overlooking the shabby garden. From the white bungalow beyond the clapboard fence his middle-aged neighbour dying of cancer watched him through the long afternoons. Her handsome face veiled by the lace curtains resembled that of a skull. All day she would pace around the small bedroom. At the end of the second month, when the doctor's visits became more frequent, she undressed by the window, exposing her emaciated body through the veiled curtains. Each day, as he watched from the cubular room, he saw different aspects of her eroded body, the black breasts reminding him of the eyes of the bomber pilot, the abdominal scars like the radiation burns of the young woman. After her death he followed the funeral cars among the reservoirs in the white Pontiac.

The Lost Symmetry of the Blastosphere. "This reluctance to accept the fact of his own consciousness," Dr. Nathan wrote, "may reflect certain positional difficulties in the immediate context of time and space. The right-angle spiral of a stairwell may remind him of similar biases within the chemistry of the biological kingdom. This can be carried to remarkable lengths—for example, the jutting balconies of the Hilton Hotel have become identified with the lost gill-slits of the dying film actress, Elizabeth Taylor.

Much of Travis's thought concerns what he terms "the lost symmetry of the blastosphere"—the primitive precursor of the embryo that is the last structure to preserve perfect symmetry in all planes. It occurred to Travis that our own bodies may conceal the rudiments of a symmetry not only about the vertical axis but also the horizontal. One recalls Goethe's notion that the skull is formed of modified vertebrae—similarly, the bones of the pelvis may constitute the remains of a lost sacral skull. The resemblance between the histologies of lung and kidney has long been noted. Other correspondences of respiratory and urinogenital function come to mind, enshrined both in popular mythology (the supposed equivalence in size of nose and penis) and in psychoanalytic symbolism (the "eyes" are a common code for the testicles). In conclusion, it seems that Travis's extreme sensitivity to the volumes and geometry of the world around him, and their immediate translation into psychological terms, may reflect a belated attempt to return to a symmetrical world, one that will recapture the perfect symmetry of the blastosphere, and the acceptance of the 'Mythology of the Amniotic Return.' In his mind World War III represents the final self-destruction and imbalance of an asymmetric world, the last suicidal spasm of the dextro-rotatory helix, DNA. The human organism is an atrocity exhibition at which he is an unwilling spectator . . ."

Eurydice in a Used-Car Lot. Margaret Travis paused in the empty foyer of the cinema, looking at the photographs in the display frames. In the dim light beyond the curtains she saw the dark-suited figure of Captain Webster, the muffled velvet veiling his handsome eyes. The last few weeks had been a nightmare—Webster with his long-range camera and obscene questions. He seemed to take a certain sardonic pleasure in compiling this one-man Kinsey Report on her . . . positions, planes, where and when Travis placed his hands on her body—why didn't he ask Catherine Austen? As for wanting to magnify the photographs and paste them up on enormous hoardings, ostensibly to save her from Travis . . . She glanced at the stills in the display frames, of this elegant and poetic film in which Cocteau had brought together all the myths of his own

journey of return. On an impulse, to annoy Webster, she stepped through the side-exit and walked away past a small yard of cars with numbered windshields. Perhaps she would make her descent here, Eurydice in a used-car lot?

The Concentration City. In the night air they passed the shells of concrete towers, blockhouses half-buried in rubble, giant conduits filled with tyres, overhead causeways crossing broken roads. Travis followed the bomber pilot and the young woman along the faded gravel. They walked across the foundations of a guard house into the weapons range. The concrete aisles stretched into the darkness across the airfield. *In the suburbs of Hell Travis walked in the flaring light of the petrochemical plants. The ruins of abandoned cinemas stood at the street corners, faded hoardings facing them across the empty streets. In a waste lot of wrecked cars he found the burnt body of the white Pontiac. He wandered through the deserted suburbs.* The crashed bombers lay under the trees, grass growing through their wings. The bomber pilot helped the young woman into one of the cockpits. Travis began to mark out a circle on the concrete target area.

How Garbo Died. "This film is a unique document," Webster explained as he led Catherine Austen into the basement cinema. "At first sight it seems to be a strange news-reel about the latest tableau sculptures—there are a series of plaster casts of film stars and politicians in bizarre poses—how they were made we can't find out, they seem to have been cast from the living models, LBJ and Mrs. Johnson, Burton and the Taylor actress, there's even one of Garbo dying. We were called in when the film was found." He signalled to the projectionist. "One of the casts is of Margaret Travis—I won't describe it, but you'll see why we're worried. Incidentally, a touring version of Keimholz's 'Dodge 35' was seen travelling at speed on a motorway yesterday, a wrecked white car with the plastic dummies of a World War III pilot and a girl with facial burns making love among a refuse of bubble-gum war cards and oral contraceptive wallets."

War-Zone D. On his way across the car-park Dr. Nathan stopped and shielded his eyes from the sun. During the past week a series of enormous signs had been built along the roads surrounding the hospital, almost walling it in from the rest of the world. A group of workmen on a scaffolding truck were pasting up the last of the displays, a 100-foot-long panel that appeared to represent a section of a sand-dune. Looking at it more closely, Dr. Nathan realised that in fact it was an immensely magnified portion of the skin over the iliac crest. Glancing at the hoardings, Dr. Nathan recognised other magnified fragments, a segment of lower lip, a right nostril, a portion of female perineum. Only an anatomist would have identified these fragments, each represented as a formal geometric pattern. At least five hundred of the signs would be needed to contain the whole of this gargantuan woman, terraced here into a quantified sand-sea. A helicopter soared overhead, its pilot supervising the work of the men on the truck. Its down-draught ripped away some of the paper panels. They floated across the road, an eddying smile plastered against the radiator grille of a parked car.

The Atrocity Exhibition. Entering the exhibition, Travis sees the atrocities of Viet Nam and the Congo mimetised in the "alternate" death of Elizabeth Taylor; he tends the dying film star, eroticising her punctured bronchus in the over-ventilated verandas of the London Hilton; he dreams of Max Ernst, superior of the birds; "Europe after the Rain"; the human race: Caliban asleep across a mirror smeared with vomit.

The Danger Area. Webster ran through the dim light after Margaret Travis. He caught her by the entrance to the main camera bunker, where the cheekbones of an enormous face had been painted in faded technicolour across the rust-stained concrete. "For God's sake—" She looked down at his strong wrist against her breast, then wrenched herself away. "Mrs. Travis! Why do you think we've taken all these photographs?" Webster held the torn lapel of his suit, then pointed to a tableau figure in the uniform of a Chinese infantryman standing at the end of the conduit.

"The place is crawling with the things—you'll never find him." As he spoke a searchlight in the centre of the airfield lit up the target areas, outlining the rigid figures of the mannequins.

The Enormous Face. Dr. Nathan limped along the drainage culvert, peering at the huge figure of a dark-haired woman painted on the sloping walls of the blockhouse. The magnification was enormous. The wall on his right, the size of a tennis court, contained little more than the right eye and cheekbone. He recognised the woman from the hoardings he had seen near the hospital—the screen actress, Elizabeth Taylor. Yet these designs were more than enormous replicas. They were equations that embodied the fundamental relationship between the identity of the film actress, and the millions who were distant reflections of her, and the time and space of their own bodies and postures. The planes of their lives interlocked at oblique angles, fragments of personal myths fusing with the deities of the commercial cosmologies. The presiding deity of their lives, the film actress and her fragmented body provided a set of operating formulae for their passage through consciousness. Yet Margaret Travis's role was ambiguous. In some way Travis would attempt to relate his wife's body, with its familiar geometry, to that of the film actress, quantifying their identities to the point where they became fused with the elements of time and landscape. Dr. Nathan crossed an exposed causeway to the next bunker. He leaned against the dark décolleté. When the searchlight flared between the blockhouses he put on his shoe. "No . . ." He was hobbling towards the airfield when the explosion lit up the evening air.

The Exploding Madonna. For Travis, the ascension of his wife's body above the target area, exploding madonna of the weapons range, was a celebration of the rectilinear intervals through which he perceived the surrounding continuum of time and space. Here she became one with the madonnas of the hoardings and the ophthalmic films, the venus of the magazine cuttings whose postures celebrated his own search through the suburbs of Hell.

Departure. The next morning, Travis wandered along the gunnery aisles. On the bunkers the painted figure of the screen actress mediated all time and space to him through her body. As he searched among the tyres and coils of barbed wire he saw the helicopter rising into the sky, the bomber pilot at the controls. It made a leftward turn and flew off towards the horizon. Half an hour later the young woman drove away in the white Pontiac. Travis watched them leave without regret. When they had gone the corpses of Dr. Nathan, Webster and Catherine Austen formed a small tableau by the bunkers.

A Terminal Posture. Lying on the worn concrete of the gunnery aisle, he assumed the postures of the fragmented body of the film actress, mimetising his past dreams and anxieties in the dune-like fragments of her body. The pale sun shone down on this eucharist of the madonna of the hoardings.

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BRIAN W. ALDISS: ANOTHER LITTLE BOY

The main content of this story occurred to me when reading J. G. Ballard's *Assassination Weapon* in a recent "New Worlds". Ballard deals powerfully with various myth-names of our age, such as Kennedy and Malcolm X; then I came on a name upon which others before Ballard have seized: Major Eatherly.

For the benefit of those who are happily unversed in the matter, Major Eatherly was marginally concerned with the dropping of the first atomic bombs on Japan and later underwent mental care. It occurred to me that he represented one of the false legends of our time, the legend that nuclear weapons could somehow be renounced while retaining all the other ingredients of the civilization that had brought them into being and rendered them to some extent necessary. To think otherwise is like supposing that WWII could have been avoided if the Allies had not gone to help Poland in 1939.

(But you see I am trailing my coat, since I happen to owe my continued existence to the atomic bomb.)

However, be the facts what they may, undoubtedly a rather romantic feeling of guilt has grown up about "The Bomb", to which I suspect the generation now in its teens is immune; it has "The Pill" instead, which introduces questions of life and death entirely as interesting as The Bomb ever did. I hope this generation will not enjoy the guilts of its predecessors.

Which brings us to my small story. It is specifically about these two rival inventions, and how the attitude to the one may change the attitude to the other. Anyone who was alive when The Bomb was dropped risks looking as comically old-fashioned in his attitudes in another eighty years as do those of our ancestors who, eighty years ago, opposed the opening of the St. Gotthard Tunnel on the grounds that since God had put the mountains there, he meant us to go over them and not through them, by gum! *Another Little Boy* is a light-hearted warning about how idiotic our favourite scruples are going to look, three generations from now!

B.W.A.

THE HEAD OF Zadar Smith World collected the dozen little plastic shapes off his desk in both hands, lifted them, and poured them back on to the desk top again.

"Yes," he said. "Okay. Whatever we do will be the greatest."

He snapped off contact and the seamed countenance of the President of United States Both Americas faded from view on the big screen across from him. The electronic impulses that had carried a representation of him still swarmed like spermatozoa on a slide; the screen remained live; in their time, the busy spermatozoa had delineated many famous faces, Jack Gascadden of Gascasms, Java the Clown, and a score of heads of state. The head of Zadar Smith World had never given any of them such an enthusiastic yes before; Morgan Zadar had not built up his agency by being unexclusive.

The little plastic shapes formed S's and X's and Z's and 8's and 3's and other abstract wriggles that belonged to an

unknown pre-uterine alphabet. Some of them had interlocked. As Zadar picked at them, he called the six members of his executive.

They came up from their various offices across the world: Saul Betatrom from New York, Dave Li Tok from Peking, Jerry Peran from Singapore, Fess Reed from Antarctic City, Mazda Onakwa from Ibadan, Thora Peabright from Bonn. Thora was the only woman to hold one of these key jobs set in the key cities of the world.

They nodded at each other, momentarily a little comsat community in one room and full colour.

"J. J. Spillaine just on the solid," Zadar told them. "Our biggest assignment yet."

"Not another festival!" Jerry Peran said.

"It could be. That's up to Zadar Smith World to decide. We have a date to celebrate. Spillaine says all nations will be celebrating it and he wants the U.S.B.A. to put on the biggest most appropriate show."

"What are we celebrating that's that big?"

"Think! You all know the date."

They chorused it: "September 7th."

"I meant the year. 2044. Mean anything to you?"

They all looked blank. Thora Peabright said hopefully, "Abe Lincoln's bicentenary or something?"

"No, but you're getting colder." Zadar could be very biting, especially with women. "Next year on August 6th, we are going to have to hold the biggest firework display ever. I leave it to the six of you to figure out why and how. Call me when you have something valid to contribute. Right?"

He went back to playing moodily with the IUDs.

Thora Peabright put on a Mondrian sack which divided her into four unequal but appetising segments. She called Saul Betatrom.

"I'm coming over to New York to see you."

"What? In person?"

"Why not? The new age of prudery hasn't started yet. We should get together on this project."

"Project X! Thora, what *did* happen on August 6th, 1945? It was before my time."

"Search me. Was it the date President Forstein was born?"

"Discovery of radio?"

"First rocketship landed on the moon?"

"Birth of Arthur C. Clarke?"

"Foundation of Scandinavian Republic?"

"Death of Grace Metallious?"

"Ho Chi Min?"

"Picasso?"

"Walter Disney?" She laughed. "We're guessing! Look it up and I'll see you."

She sauntered out of her apartment, took the elevator up to the sixty-second floor, stepped out on the roof. All of Bonn lay about her, the Rhine gleaming dully to one side. High in the sky, fluorescences read WELCOME TO UNITED GERMANY, HOME OF MEI. MEI was one of the world's largest micro-electronic firms; they made synthetic bladders and other humanpart replacements as well as major spaceware; Zadar Smith World handled their account. Dandled their account.

A helijet took her out to the airport and she had to wait twenty minutes for the next supersonic to lift for the Americas. It bore Thora up through the fluorescent sign of her own devising, and two hours later the plane was cooling at Kennedy. She jetted to Betotrom's on Fifth and Two Twenty-Fifth.

Saul wore a transparent floral brocade two-piece. He was small and dark, like Thora, and almost hairless.

"Can we make love before we get down to business?" he asked. "This is the fifth time you and I have met person to person, but somehow we've never coupled."

"I'm not feeling receptive today, thanks, Saul. I had three orgasms yesterday and I'm supposed to be on a diet."

"Why come over in person, then? I thought that was what you meant."

He pouted and she lay a hand on his arm. "I wouldn't want to disappoint you, Saul. Come on, then."

He kissed her. "You're a honey, and I think you're hairier than I, which always interests me. Couch, pool, or centrifuge? Which you fancy? They're all right on the premises."

She settled for the pool. While they contorted gently together in the oily solution, he said, "Before you came, I was reading up on the Fert-Asia annual report—we handle them, as you know. The reports on poverty of orgasm for those countries are really shocking. Sexuologists now distinguish between ten kinds of orgasm, and just in India alone Fert-Asia estimate that eighty-four percent of the male population experience no better than a grade seven orgasm."

"The effects of the CM-bombs on Calcutta have something to do with it. That was—when did the Indonesian-Ladian Contained Conflict end?—only two and a half years ago."

"But the figures for Cambodia are almost as bad, and the Cambodian-Malayan CC was at least five years back."

"I don't know what the world's coming to."

"Fortunately, American org-progs for the coming year are very encouraging."

They fell noisily silent, and a few moments later were able to congratulate themselves happily on being comfortably above the org-rating for their age-class group.

Over a smog fizz, they got down to business. Betatrom had dialled the satellibrary and was flashed excerpts from the world encyclopaedia. He spread his arms to convey size as he said, "This really is big, Thora. A hundred years ago next year sees the birth of the modern age, the age of nucleonics."

She frowned prettily. "I thought this was the Age of Sperm Husbandry."

"It's that as well, but chiefly it's the Age of Nuclear Power—and just about to come to an end, too, if the reports on superstellar discharges are true, and we can harness them."

"The Nuclear Age . . . Nothing immediately occurs to me, but it's a big assignment, obviously, if Spillaine gets on to Morgan direct."

"Right. Whoever comes up with a valid way of celebrating this for Morgan is going to be Second-in-line at Zadar Smith World right enough. Let's think this thing through together, Thora, pool ideas."

She looked at him old-fashioned. "See me look at you old-fashioned, Saul Betatrom? Who kids whom?"

"You mean you've thought of something already?"

She laughed. "Not a thing, uncle-o! But if I did, wow, I sure enough wouldn't want to share it!"

"You're a mean German woman, and you aren't even as hairy as I hoped for!"

For the next two days, Thora Peabright worked hard at research, punching buttons like mad. Her five co-partners, each in their different capitals, also worked. On the third day, Fess Reed called her from Antarctic City. Thora knew Fess well; they had worked and orgied together in earlier days, and jointly handled the Hemisphere Hallucinogens account before the American-American dust of '35. She saw at once that his wary manner meant Fess thought he was on to something.

"How're you doing, Thora? Thought of anything?"

"I have an idea or two. You?"

"The odd thought." He was shuffling juke boxes on his desk, not looking up at her image in his screen. "Maybe this celebration should take the form of some great big memorial—like maybe rebuilding Stonehenge or something."

"Great idea, Fess! You put it up to Morgan?"

"Nuh . . . Oh, I nearly forgot, I was wondering if, er, Morgan was trying this idea on, to catch us out or something. Do you think he has come up with something himself?"

"You know Morgan! He pays *us* to have ideas. What put that notion in your head?"

As if she had reminded him of his head, Fess scratched it and said, "When he called us, he was playing with something. Not the usual juke bones. I wondered if that was meant as a hint or something that we were supposed to cotton on to."

She laughed easily. She laughed now. "You cotton-socketer, you! Those were IUDs he was shuffling. Don't tell me you've never seen one!"

"Inter-uterine deterrents! Good gravy! You know, Thora, I never have seen one."

"Morgan must have got them as samples from the IUD Corporation account. They're fitted in female children on birth, grow with them, stay in place until the Central Computers turn up her procreatory code call, if ever."

"IU deterrents! I thought they were mysterious letters Zadar was tossing about! Thanks for telling me, Thora--I hope your number'll come up one day!"

"I'm getting a bit long in the womb for that sort of thing."

She cut the connection. Sweet old Fess, always so innocent, didn't know a deterrent when he saw one . . .

The word drifted through her mind. Deterrent . . . It was an old-fashioned word, wholly connected with life now, for the IUDs had brought light to a world perched on the darkness of over-population. IUDs had become compulsory after the Italian-Spanish CC, before she was born. Or was it the Spanish-Jugoslav CC? Or had there been a Spanish-Jugoslav CC? . . .

Deterrent . . . Once it had been connected with death rather than life. Words change their meanings mysteriously. Something to do with bombs, had it been?

She dialled the satellibrary, switched to encyclopaedia, turned to BOMB. Her screen filled with yards of expository matter on the CM-Bomb, the Coherent Matter Bomb that only the Big Three, China, United Germany, and Americas possessed. She switched to a sub-heading of History, accelerated the pour-rate. When the word Deterrent flashed almost subliminally by, she hit the recall and then stopped the tumble altogether.

Nuclear Deterrent. A military theory of the Twentieth Century that certain pre-CM devices were more effective when used as threats than as missiles. See *Twentieth Century, Military*. Also, *Atomic Bomb*.

As she redialled, print scattered like synchrotron emission across the screen. She found herself confronted with yards of copy on *The Cold War*. Baffled, she scanned on, trying to grasp what the facts presented had to do with the Contained Conflict between Australia and Antarctica. After a while, she gathered that they had nothing to do with it; this was a minor non-conflict of the pre-CM age she was confronted with, and not the famous Australia-Antarctica conflict of the same name. As she hit the tumbler to wipe

the screen clear, a date caught her eye, and she frantically redialled. *August, 1945.*

More references met her eye. She chased them down with increased éclat, and was finally confronted with the history of the *Second World War*, of which she had never even heard—but then it had been a smaller world in those days, and no one had even set foot on Mars and Venus and Mercury, not to mention the New Planets. After a few moments, she began skimming, bored by accounts of national groups of which she had never even heard, Estonians, Belgians, Croats. She tumbled on to Japan. That was more interesting. United Germany had a lot of trade with Japan; indeed, since the Japanese-Korean débâcle of '39, the Japs were competing rather unpleasantly in world markets. In spaceware particularly, Jap ablation shields, LORs, star-gaffies, glitch baffles, space suits, and even Molabs were sweeping the market, and particularly squeezing MEi, whose spaceware department had emitted down-falling graphs every one of the last five accountancy years.

Finally Thora caught up with the date again. *August 6th, 1945.* First nuclear device, a small atomic bomb, delivered by plane from an American airstrip on Tinian Island and dropped over the Japanese city of Hiroshima. As a result of this, and a second bomb dropped later on Nagasaki, the Japanese emperor capitulated.

She broke contact with the satellibrary. For some minutes, she sat in concentrated thought. There was a small mystery here she wanted to clear up. She pressed a bell and her servant Karl appeared; he wore a shaggy neuter grey uniform and his head was shaven; he bowed as he entered.

"Karl, somewhere in the city there must be a collection of the old books—cloth-bound things with paper pages, you know? Locate such a collection for me. Dial museums and so forth—old cultural centres, perhaps the College of Reversed Circumstance."

"Yes, mistress."

"I particularly require books of the period 1945-1960. Hurry!"

He bowed again and left. His family had gone under in the commercial rat-race; he and his two sisters had been

unable to pass the Means Test, and were chartered into personal service for a period of ten years; it was an enlightened and, above all, efficient form of slavery.

Karl reported back in twenty minutes, just when Thora was growing impatient and thinking of getting the prod to his back.

"A large collection of the books you desire is at the Museum of Pre-CM History."

"I didn't know it survived. Can't be state-owned . . . Who is the—what do you call him, man in charge, curator?"

"Heinry Godsmith. Librarian."

"I will go and call on him in person. Take me there. Wait while I change my gown and panties."

Heinry Godsmith was flushed with excitement at coming face to face with a beautiful woman—hardly surprisingly, since Thora Peabright had switched on her tiny microwave adrenalin-stimulant, which set his blood in a certain state of confusion. But Thora also was slightly off her guard with the thrill of her discovery.

"To think that here in these mouldy old boring rooms might lie a secret worth rediscovering!" she exclaimed, glancing round the shelves, crammed with their ancient pre-electronic volumes.

"We are not an age that looks at all to the past, Miss Peabright," Godsmith said. He was solidly built, smartly dressed, neat of movement. Though he spent most of his life underground with his books, he used canned sun and was almost as tanned as she. "Life is so exciting today, the many discoveries in space have distracted us from our own terrestrial past."

"But the so-called Second World War——"

"We have so many conflicts these days, millions of people killed all the while, that anything *that* old is just old hat. A hundred years ago—pah! People didn't know they were living then!"

Somewhat surprised by his attitude, she said, "You must love these books in your care!"

"Why? It's just a job—probably not as interesting as your job. What do you do for a living, Miss Peabright,

may I ask? Bet it's more interesting than this post! Aren't you something to do with advertising?"

"I happen to be a senior executive with Zadar Smith World!"

"I'm sorry, I've opened my mouth too wide. What can I do for you? You wouldn't care for a fornicatory bout, would you?"

"I have work to do. So have you." Now she had established the upper hand, she could relax. "We are searching for ways in which to celebrate the centenary of the birth of the nuclear age. I must use your books for research—the satellibrary is very poor on history, and in any case contains no contemporary documents."

Godsmith looked down at his neat square finger-tips. "Our immediate ancestors were bores, don't you think—crippled with guilt about sex and war and food and drugs and all the things we most enjoy. Good reason for cutting ourselves off from their nonsense, wouldn't you say?"

She looked him over. "You're quite intelligent. What are you doing in a feeble short-arsed job like this?"

"Mainly talking to feeble short-arsed women. Change your mind about a bout?"

"I'm working."

He looked at her judiciously. "I wouldn't have taken you for a lesbian."

"You're not taking me for anything, Mr. Godsmith. Now let's get to work. I'll buy all these books. Deliver them to my address."

"They're not for sale."

"A million krauts!"

"They're not for sale. You'll have to study them here, right under my nose."

"Your *what*?"

She worked for a week, down in the cellar, often having to use her de-erector ray on Godsmith at full power. As her knowledge of the past grew, so did her horror and disgust of it. Even as the odious Godsmith had said, the denizens of the mid-twentieth century were a poor lot, reeking of a million guilts and repressions. Finally, she had all she wanted. She closed the last book, a biography of Major Eatherly, whom she regarded as an unmitigated idiot.

Henry Godsmith was not about, so she walked out, went straight home, and took a trace dose of head acid and a perfume bath, with Karl in soothing attendance.

Then she started worrying. Too many days had elapsed; her five colleagues might well have stolen a lead on her in the centenary stakes. How were they planning to celebrate August 6th, 2045?

One by one, she dialled them. All five were cagey, but all let something of their plans leak out under Thora's spell as they saw her on their panels, sprawling appetisingly naked in her bath.

When the last one had rung off, she wrote a note with her finger on the EL slate by the tub, to see how they rated.

"Saul. Televised mass orgy with all heads of state participating.

"Jerry. Auroral display in ionosphere visible everywhere spelling BLESS OUR EARTH.

"Fess. Rebuilding Stonehenge and placing enlarged plastic reproduction of same on Moon.

"Mazda. Setting fire to Jupiter with super-CM-bomb to provide new mini-sun.

"Dave. Great Orbital Electronic Worlds Fair."

Thora didn't personally like any of the ideas, except maybe Saul's, and that was old stuff. The Jupiter idea might be fun, but the colonies on Jupiter's moons were going to be hard to convince on that score. Besides, none of the ideas had the bone-cracking relevance of hers. She had to see Morgan Zadar and put it over personally. The dreary days in Godsmith's cellars had not been in vain.

Zadar's private apartments were in Monterey. He greeted Thora in a room where naked homosexual male slaves disported in wall tanks, forming grotesque and jerkily moving friezes dedicated to the arts of fellatio and pedicatio and other lively inventions.

She kissed his hand and greeted him formally. He was a magnificent and ugly man, panting heavily as if he had just emerged from one of the tanks. Over a sumptuous meal, she brought up the main subject.

"The other executives have already made suggestions for ways of commemorating next year's centenary. I gather?"

"I have had various suggestions."

"I wish to offer you mine. It is a wow! Everyone will be amused."

She worked up to her suggestion carefully, filling in background first.

She explained to Zadar how, in 1945, the North Americans had been fighting the Japanese and, by appropriating British ideas, had developed an atomic bomb. It was large in comparison with the button-sized CM bombs of 2044—fourteen feet long by about five in diameter, and weighing about ten thousand tons. This bomb was loaded into an old-fashioned aircraft called, according to some reports, B-29 and, according to others, *Enola Gay*. The bomb was called Little Boy. The plane carried it over to the Japanese city of Hiroshima and dropped it. Little Boy generated a fire ball some eighteen hundred feet across and a temperature of one hundred million degrees. If it had been an advertising campaign, it could not have been more successful. Some eighty thousand people were killed immediately, with one hundred and forty thousand more dying within the next year, mainly from radiation sickness. Quite an impressive score. The time was 8.16 in the morning of August 6th, 1945, and the great new age of nuclear power was born there and then.

"The bomb stopped the war," Thora said, "and paved the way for all the better bombs, like the Coherent Matter bomb, and the quickie contained conflicts with which we are now familiar. It certainly was progress. Yet our queer old ancestors went crazy with guilt about it, wanted to ban it, made a martyr out of Eatherly, wrote books and sick novels and dislocated prose and gonnows-what about it."

"It was a sick age," Zadar said dismissively. "They didn't know how to be happy. You shouldn't have dug into those old relics, Thora—do you no good."

"That's the way I got my idea! Listen, here's what we do to celebrate next year! We get a replica of the *Enola Gay* and find if one of the minor nations don't still have an atom bomb, and we fly it over with a blaze of publicity and we drop it on Hiroshima again smack on 8.16 in the morning! How do you like that, Morgan?"

He looked a little restive and scratched his nose.

"It's a fine idea right enough. But you aren't the first to put it over to me."

She gasped. The room, the young males in their tanks, swam. "Not Saul . . . Not Fess . . . But who? Dave?"

"Complete outsider. Young feller called Henry Godsmith. Clever little guy! I put him on the executive straight away."

The idea went to the President of the U.S.B.A., who took it to the Universal Board. Rocking with enthusiasm, the Board passed it to a man. Stage coaches, steam engines, automobiles, they had had in one jolly international circus after another. Atomic bombs they had not had. Only the Japanese delegate voted against; he was shouted down; most of the nations present had suffered too much unfair trade competition to listen to him.

Zadar had a rule about people who turned in ideas he had heard before. Thora Peabright was demoted.

She got a job on the design staff, working under Henry Godsmith, who proved to be insatiable.

They could not discover an *Enola Gay* or a B-29, but in an old museum in the District of Tunis, they found a Dakota, an antique engined airplane which would do as it was more or less contemporary with the *Enola Gay*.

The atomic bomb was more difficult. At one stage, Thora found herself attending a person-to-person meeting of the minor nations, which were not allowed by law to use CM-Bombs. They called themselves the Uncommitted nations, and still employed simple nuclear devices in their conflicts.

Finland, Ireland, Cyprus, Britain, Rhodesia, Lichtenstein, Yemen, Venezuela, Falkland Isles, and Hong Kong were present at the meeting. Thora managed to get the delegate for Britain to one side and make her offer. The minister, an aged man called Terry Spalding-Woad, promised to see what he could do. Not content with that, Thora accompanied him back to Britain. It was her first visit to the little tourist island; Zadar Smith World would pay.

They pushed their way through the hawkers and beggars and entered the Houses of Parliament. Long and boring whispered discussions now followed in many a pokey council chamber, in which they were often interrupted by

inquisitive visitors. But at last they were on to something definite. The Prime Minister himself appeared, and accepted the payment Thora offered.

As he pocketed it, he said, "I must tell you, Miss Peabright, that this isn't actually an atomic bomb but an H-bomb. H for hydrogen, you know. You're very welcome to it. We've kept it for eighty years—it formed our nuclear deterrent in the sixties of last century, so I gather. I hope it still works."

The preparations were completed in time for August 6th, 2045. On that day, watched by the comsats of the world, the shaky old Tunisian Dakota carried the rusty old British H-Bomb over to Hiroshima. It fell through the bright morning air. It blossomed. A gigantic fireball spread out, brighter than a thousand suns, rising rapidly, engulfing the old plane, much to the delight of the onlookers. The Japanese, those that survived, howled with rage. Everyone else agreed it was truly an historic occasion.

Everyone declared, with a touch of sentiment that would not have been out of place a century before, that such great events should always be commemorated, and demanded an encore. Over in Nagasaki, the fly boys started packing their bags.

Brian Aldiss, Arthur C. Clarke, Michael Moorcock,
Judith Merril, Damon Knight and many others, all
agree . . .

Charles L. Harness
is one of the most original and talented
writers in science fiction

THE ROSE
is his greatest novel to date
Compact 3s 6d

Invaded by LOVE

Thomas M. Disch

o n e

THE SUN HAD set dismally behind Jersey at half past four, and since there really wasn't any work for him—no committees to bully, no crises to superintend, no reprimands to deliver—Secretary-General Seneca Traquair decided he might as well go home. Outside a cold December rain had commenced. Traquair walked up a 42nd Street unusually bare of traffic or pedestrians. The fine droplets coating his thick glasses (a deliberate anachronism, the glasses were the Secretary-General's personal trademark, like Churchill's cigar) made the lights of the decorations strung over the street flare and sparkle like a myriad Christmas stars. Lovely. He turned up the fur collar of his coat and smiled ironically (lately, it seemed, he smiled no other way), think-

ing: *Watch yourself, old man, you're getting sentimental.* One could ill afford sentimentality these days.

Jimmy, the doorman at Tudor Village, ran forward with an umbrella as soon as he saw Traquair approach. He burred with good will. His familiarity exceeded even what an American would have tolerated. He was a convert, of course. Most of the lower classes were. You couldn't blame them.

But he did, he did blame them. Traquair was a humanist in the 18th Century manner; he valued human civilization above all things else, and he could not see that civilization crumbling away day by day without resenting the innumerable Jimmies of this world who were letting it happen.

Ah, if it had been only the Jimmies . . .

He rode in the littered elevator to the penthouse. When he came in the door, Pauline was standing there, smiling. "My love," she said softly, and gave him a timid peck on the cheek.

He looked at her with distaste. Love! how he had come to loathe that word. It meant unwashed bodies, dirty collars, littered elevators. It meant insolence and impropriety. It meant—or soon would mean—the collapse of everything that the human race had striven to achieve through centuries of slow, unsteady evolution.

And he very much feared that there was nothing he or anyone else could do about it. *Love*, as his wife was wont to say, *conquers all*.

A man of the atomic age, Seneca Traquair had never been a believer in end-with-a-whimper theories. But each day seemed to be bringing exactly such an ending nearer. Australia, Traquair's birthplace and the country with more meat on the hoof *per capita* than any other, was already experiencing famine. They had stopped slaughtering sheep and cattle; they had stopped fishing; they had stopped exterminating pests—from rabbits all the way down to the lowest cabbage worm. And why? because of Love.

If it doesn't conquer all, he thought, *it will at least do for us*. But he said nothing to Pauline, who was, since September, a convert. There were, by now, very few humans who weren't converts.

GOD IS LOVE: the golden letters were superimposed over

a view of the nave of All-Faiths Cathedral (once St. Patrick's). The letters dissolved and the camera zoomed in on Brother Luster Lovely in the gilt-encrusted pulpit. Brother Lovely kept his eyes cast down while the congregation concluded its hymn *Nearer My God to Thee*.

Appropriate, Traquair thought, *for a sinking ship*.

The hymn faded away. Brother Lovely raised his shining doe-eyes to camera level and addressed not just the meagre thousands filling All-Faiths but all his millions of converts throughout the country.

"Oh, my dear brothers and sisters, how good, good, good it is to be *with* you once again! What joy to be enfolded in the radiance of your love! All-enveloping love, the living light, the goal of all our questing, which moves our hearts even as it moves the stars!"

Traquair felt the by-now-familiar sensation in his chest, that sickening spasm of yielding to the man's entreaty. Then, with only a small effort it was gone and Traquair could look at him with a cold eye and a staunch heart.

Because, after all, he wasn't a man—he was an alien. To be sure, the basic form was humanish: two feet, two arms, a face the elements of which were disposed reassuringly like Traquair's own. In fact, there was more than a little resemblance. It had often been said of Traquair, who stood six feet six inches in his stocking feet, that he looked like an El Greco—his *St. Andrew* in particular. And Brother Lovely might have stepped right out of one of that master's paintings: his long, lean, hermaphrodite body; his thin yet curiously soft face; his great, yearning eyes forever rolling, rolling like the eyes of some palsied teddy-bear. But his most salient feature, that which had earned him the name of *Luster*, was the way he shone. The blood flowing beneath his silk-smooth skin was phosphorus-bearing instead of iron-bearing; in consequence he gave off a slight radiance, a nimbus imparting the imprimature of spirituality and high-seriousness to his most prosaic utterances. In moments of intensest emotion, he lit up like Times Square.

"Finally, brethren," the alien missionary was saying (and though the programme had scarcely begun, he already was getting a glow on), "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever

things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely—" Here he paused and brightened by several degrees. "—whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

A profound sigh swelled from the tridivision, while Brother Lovely lowered his teddy-bear eyes with a great show of humility. The quote Traquair recognized (his father had been a missionary in the bush country) as Philippians 4, 8. Like all good evangels, Brother Lovely had appropriated whatever native religious traditions suited his purpose—and these seemed to include anything short of voodoo. Doctrine meant little to him; it was the *experience*, as he had said so often, that counted.

What he had accomplished had been nothing less than the democratization of mysticism. He had made the Beatific Vision—the self-transcendent union with the Ground of Being—available at a price anyone could afford. Whether society could afford it was another question, but social problems have never been of consuming interest to mystics.

"Love," Brother Lovely solemnly quoted, "is like a lovely rose."

"I'll remember that," Traquair mumbled, switching off the set.

"Gee, Dad," whined a voice in the darkened room, "can't we watch it to the end? It's only a half-hour show."

"Lenny, you should be in your own room, doing your homework."

"I was, but when I heard Brother Lovely's voice, and—" But Lenny was quick to register his father's disapproving look and veered off along a more accommodating line. "You're right, of course, father. If I don't study my French I'll never get through eighth grade."

Lenny's feigned agreeableness was even more distasteful than his admiration for Brother Lovely. It was unnatural for an eleven-year-old to be so milkily inoffensive. And this latest notion of his—that he would drop out of school as soon as he had finished the eighth grade! (When he had first brought up this idea, a month before, he had wanted to drop out immediately, but Traquair had been able to persuade him that, in view of the technological nature of modern society, he would need at least an eighth grade

diploma ; Traquair had viewed the whole matter as a joke then.)

It was all of a piece: Lenny's disaffection with school, the Traquairs' cook of ten years' standing quitting her job, the many diplomats who had returned to their countries, as indifferent to the new problems of food supply as to their immemorial quarrels and rivalries, which were vanished like mists since Brother Lovely's arrival. All worldly ambitions were becoming extinct.

The odour of holiness was not always of lilies. Traquair remembered the time, a week before, when he had gone into his own kitchen, which was, since the cook's departure, under Pauline's exclusive jurisdiction. The counter had been covered with scraps of mouldy food and empty tins. The white linoleum floor had been mottled a deep brown with stains, and the stove was slick with grease. Pauline had been washing the dishes in a pan, because she didn't know how to operate the automatic washer and because the sink was full of roaches, whom, she had explained, she was afraid of drowning.

"But Pauline, cockroaches cause hepatitis."

"They're alive. And living things are *holy*."

She had tried to block the door to the broom closet, where the bug bomb was kept, but he'd pushed her away. He sprayed everywhere until the room was reeking with insecticide and his eyes were smarting. The roaches had dithered about in the litter frantically. Some of them had been an inch long. Pauline, unable to bear the sight of the massacre, had fled from the kitchen.

That, though neither said anything of it afterwards, had been effectively the end of their marriage.

t w o

YOUNG DALWOOD SAT staring at the blue-green December day beyond the blue-green windows of that particular cell of the U.N. Secretariat. He was grinning broadly, and his eyes were dilated with an inexpressible happiness. Traquair had practically to shout to get his attention. "Dalwood! I asked you a question."

"Ah, Mr. Traquair, yes, sir, how do you do? Lovely day."

"How is your mother, Dalwood?"

Dalwood's grin broadened. "Fine, sir. Fit as a fiddle. She left the hospital this morning on her own two feet."

"I had understood it was more serious than that."

"We had all thought that, but thank God, we were all wrong. The doctor says she looks good for another twenty years."

"She's eighty, isn't she? I find that doctor's optimism a little breezy, but I'm happy to hear she's recovered." Traquair turned to go into his own office.

"Mr. Traquair," Dalwood called out nervously, "there's someone in your office waiting to see you."

"Why don't they wait out here? Who is it?"

Dalwood lowered his eyes to his desk and blushed. "Brother Luster Lovely, sir." Traquair made sounds ominous of an explosion. He began urgently to explain. "You see, I met him last night at the hospital. He was visiting the sick, and Mother had just died——"

"I thought you said she was recovered."

"Will you let me finish, sir? She had died, and they were wheeling her body down the hall, and we came past Brother Lovely, and he laid his right hand on her corpse—and then she was alive again, sir, and the cancer was gone too. The doctor who examined her said she looked like a woman of sixty. He said it was a miracle."

"Dalwood, if you brought antibiotics to a village of Australian bushmen, you'd soon be known as a miracle-worker too."

"I understand that, sir. But she was dead, and now she's alive, and that's the crux of the miraculous, isn't it? Even if there *is* an explanation."

"I feel much the same way about the presence of that charlatan in my office. Is there an explanation for that miracle?"

"Well, after he'd brought Mother back to life, he stayed there talking with us a while, and I don't remember now if it was me or Mother that told him where I worked——"

"It makes little difference. I suspect he knew that to begin with. I suspect that was behind his visit to Bellvue and your Mother's resurrection."

"Perhaps, sir. But in any case, I couldn't refuse him a

simple request to have an appointment with you today, sir. If he'd called up and made a more formal request, I was sure you'd have seen him. It's not as though you're really pressed for time. I just didn't see how I could refuse him. And then, too . . ." Dalwood shifted uneasily in his seat.

"And then, too—what?"

"I've become a convert, sir. Brother Lovely asked me to, and then Mother joined in, and you see, sir——" Dalwood got to his feet and approached his superior eagerly. "—it's *true*! Yes, it's true! Life *is* holy, and God is everywhere around us. My eyes have been opened, and——"

"It sounds, Dalwood, as if you've taken one of those pills."

"Why not, sir? Would you prevent a diabetic from taking insulin? Would you prevent a psychotic from taking Claritine?"

"Those are false parallels."

"They're *not*, sir. Until the scales have dropped from your eyes, you can't see the old world for what it was. The way we used to live was sick and cruel and crazy. The hatreds and the mountains of anxiety—Oh, the *blindness*! But, sir, when you can see the Love, the overwhelming Love——"

"Oh, shut up, Dalwood. You sound like my wife. The first order of business is to clear that witch doctor out of my office. I'll deal with you when I've taken care of that."

Saintly and bright, Brother Luster Lovely came forward, proffering his thin hands. To be shaken or in benediction? Traquair did not know. His sheer yellow robe, ungirdled, billowed behind him in the stale, disinfected air of 'he office.

"Dear, dear Brother Traquair," the alien carolled. "I have so long awaited this moment!"

"And your impatience finally got the better of you, eh?"

"Ah, do you blame me, then, for this impetuous visit? Perhaps I should have gone through 'channels', as your charming Mr. Dalwood suggested. But Love is so strong a force that its demands cannot be resisted." Brother Lovely grabbed Traquair's right hand in both his own and would not let go. "I had an intuition last evening, a little burst of

prophecy, that I should find your soul prepared today, Brother Traquair. Was I right?" The missionary's feverishly hot fingers closed more tightly about Traquair's hand, as though they might press the desired answer from it.

"Would you let go, please?" Freed from that unwelcome grasp, Traquair removed himself to his own desk and waved Brother Lovely to a seat a comfortable distance away. "Do you mind," he asked coldly, "if I do not address you as 'Brother'?"

"As you like. Do you mind if I *do* so address you? For I am deeply, deeply aware of the profound truth that that simple and affectionate title expresses. We *are* all brothers, Brother Traquair. Life forms a single Universal Brotherhood, a choir——"

"Please, sir! If you had no other purpose in coming here than to inquire if I am today on the brink of conversion——"

"Oh, my dear Brother," chided the missionary with a scolding wag of his forefinger, "you make it sound like the edge of the abyss!"

"—I can assure you that your intuition has deceived you. In fact I have never been further from it than I am today. On every hand I am shown fresh evidences of the errors and follies which you have brought to our planet. Seeing that you have had so unwholesome an effect, I have come to wonder if it is entirely accidental. *By their fruits, ye shall know them*, as it has been stated on good authority. In short, I have come strongly to suspect your motives, and if I felt my single request would have any effect on you, I would ask you to leave Earth immediately."

"My single motive, Brother Traquair, has been Love, the very Love that is the force binding the universe in holy oneness, that is the motive of the stars just as it is the motive of my soul. I want to share that Love with your people, nothing else and nothing less."

"It has been having a most unfortunate effect upon its victims, this love of yours. It is causing starvation, economic ruin, and political revolutions, as I'm sure you're well aware."

"I realize that there are elements here who will neces-

sarily resent what they consider poaching in their preserves. But even the slaughterhouse barons, even the general and politicians, even you, Brother Traquair, can open their thirsty souls to the transfiguring power of Love, and when they do, when *you* do, Brother, you will see that these little disturbances are as nothing in the light of Eternity. Indeed, they are a positive source of joy. You speak of starvation. *Man lives not by bread alone, Brother Traquair.* Those are not my words, but the words of Another, of a Being who——”

“I know perfectly well whose words they are, Brother Lovely. He was the same Being that fed a hungry multitude on loaves and fishes. He was not so cavalier as you about other people’s going hungry.”

The alien brightened perceptibly. “You called me Brother! Ah, there *will* come a time, sooner perhaps than you think.” Though his flesh had become more luminescent, the fresh flow of phosphorus-bearing blood could not be seen in his eyes, so that by contrast they seemed to grow dark. At such moments, he resembled a photographic negative of a human being.

“You have an unpleasant habit of wandering away from subjects that don’t suit you. If your only concern is with my soul, you may consider the discussion at an end. If you have some other purpose here, state it.”

“Yes, to be perfectly blunt, I do have a further purpose, a small request to make of you. It is a request that I’m sure even you, though you are not yet converted, will be happy to ratify. I say ‘ratify’ advisedly, for in fact the request has already been granted—by the millions upon millions of——”

“Come to the point.”

“I want the United Nations to declare a Universal Peace. Not I, but all-humanity wants it. And, as pledge and testimony to the good intentions of the several nations, there must be Total Disarmament. Immediately.”

Traquair laughed, and Brother Lovely, drawing encouragement from this, glowed a little more brightly and continued: “After all, what I request is only, as I have said, the ratification of what your people have themselves

achieved. Even before my arrival, your splendid organization had almost accomplished as much unassisted."

"Your arrival, however, changes all that."

"For the better, I hope?" Smiling brightly.

"Total Disarmament is a questionable goal in a universe as densely and diversely populated as you have given us to understand ours is. When we go out into space ourselves——"

"That is exactly the point, Brother. You cannot be allowed to join the Universal Brotherhood until you've given sufficient guarantee of your peaceful intentions. Your history, taken on the whole, has been most unreassuring. Your wars have become progressively more deadly, until only the probable annihilation of your whole species has prevented, momentarily, the final expression of your appetite for destruction. In its present, unredeemed state, mankind is a danger to the galaxy, and therefore I was sent to you with the Gift of Love. By and large, mankind has accepted that Gift, but until its acceptance is universal I shall feel that my mission has failed, Mr. Secretary, I *beg* of you——" Brother Lovely rose awkwardly from the low chair and crossed to the Secretary-General's desk in two strides. He dropped a single yellow pill on the blotter. "—Abandon this vain display of independence, the only effect of which can be to further alienate yourself from those of us who love you. Let yourself be ruled by the softening influence of Love. Be bound by Love, Brother Traquair, for the bonds of Love are the only true freedom."

At the close of this speech, Brother Lovely's features were transfigured with an unearthly radiance, and Seneca Traquair felt a moment of the most intensely painful longing to give in, to abandon the vanity, self-will, and intellectual pride, which abandonment is the necessary precondition of any nobler spiritual task. An angel somewhere in the pit of his stomach or the back of his head said: *Do it, take the pill!* and Seneca Traquair said: *No, never!* And they wrestled, Seneca Traquair and that angel, for the better part of a minute, while Brother Luster Lovely looked on, beaming, his slender fingers resting on the miniature

control box strapped at his waist, the knob of which was turned to Maximum.

Brother Luster Lovely had arrived on the planet Earth a little more than a year before, at three o'clock in the morning of November 30, 1978. He landed on a nameless atoll in the Pacific in a "ferry" the size of the Flatiron Building. His larger ship, by which he had crossed the stars, remained lazily orbiting the Earth at a comfortable 500,000 miles' distance. From the first nervous reception, hemmed in by every type of artillery in the U.N. arsenal, Brother Lovely had demonstrated a remarkable fluency in the several languages of the United Nations and a detailed knowledge of the planet's history, particularly its religious history. He expressed surprise at the absence of clergy on the welcoming committee.

That he had come as a friend of mankind could not long be held in doubt. His speeches were replete with Brotherliness and Love, so much so that certain caseworn journalists had found him something of a figure of fun and christened him Brother Luster Lovely.

His largess was unending: works of the most exquisite art; scientific treatises as seminal as *The Origin of Species*, one of which was a photographic record of the pre-Cambrian Earth, when the aliens had first visited the planet; and any number of practical appliances, major and minor, the chief of which was the complete plans for salt-to-fresh-water conversion plants. And this was to be the merest token of the fund of beauty and bountifulness in which mankind would share as soon as it joined the Universal Brotherhood. These baubles, Brother Lovely declared, were as nothing compared to his Greatest Gift.

Brother Luster Lovely revealed the nature of the Greatest Gift on Christmas Eve, 1978, standing before the Prometheus Fountain in Rockefeller Centre, (St. Patrick's being as yet unavailable). The Greatest Gift was the Gift of Love. He passed out the little yellow pills to the well-wishers assembled there, and since certain ambiguous phrases in the preceding speech (and subsequent speeches repeated these ambiguities) suggested the possibility that

the Gift of Love was also a gift of immortality, the pills were swallowed with uncritical gratitude.

Very shortly afterward, the Mayor of New York City delivered a spontaneous and rather incoherent speech on the nature of Love. The Mayor grew steadily more dithyrambic until at last he fell at Brother Luster Lovely's feet and began kissing the hem of his robe. The assembled well-wishers then broke out into a medley of Christmas carols. The cameras panned from face to enraptured face, while the announcer, having himself received the Gift of Love, eloquently interpreted these stirring scenes to the millions of television viewers throughout the nation and the world. At midnight Brother Luster Lovely announced the general availability of his Gift and signed off the air with a kiss wafted to the millions upon millions of his dear, dear Brethren.

Organized religion maintained a healthy scepticism in the face of this phenomenon, but Brother Lovely's invariable reply to their invectives was an assurance that the Gift of Love could in no way draw men away from their religions, that all faiths held the mystic contemplation of the Divine Nature to be one of the supreme happinesses of mortal man, and finally he invited them to try it themselves and then to judge. As many who did became converts. They did not, as had been promised, desert their own religions. They stayed behind and re-formed them, distributing more widely the precious Gift of Love. A year after that Christmas Eve, only the Vatican and a few lonely rebels like the Dalai Lama were holding out against the Universal Brotherhood, and it was rumoured that already a majority of the College of Cardinals was of that Brotherhood.

In any case, the majority of mankind had been converted—the majority and then some, though exactly how many holdouts there still were was not known. The whole thing had happened too fast.

The Gift itself is ineluctable. It defies description. Of the hundreds who have tried to put it into words, the most successful has been one who experienced it without the benefit of a yellow pill. He wrote:

*There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight*

*To me did seem
Apparell'd in Celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.*

For those who have received the Gift, the glory and the freshness of the dream are no longer mere recollections of a vanished childhood, as they were for Wordsworth ; they are the very stuff of present existence.

The immediate effect is usually a sudden access of joy that throws the initiate into a panic of surprised and inchoate ecstasy. Waking from this, he discovers himself in eternity, ringed round with a hundred unutterable significances. Everything is beautiful ; everything is true. Each human face is a mirror of the Divine Love, and everything that lives is holy.

For those who have experienced Love in its fullness, all this is perfectly true and completely inadequate. For those who have not experienced it, it is all a lot of nonsense, and nothing will ever convince them otherwise.

Except the Gift. The Gift is infinitely persuasive.

But whenever the subject had been broached to Seneca Traquair he had mumbled something about looking a gift-horse in the mouth, and if the subject continued, despite this, still to be broached, Traquair would cease to mutter and very likely he would say, "No, Goddammit!" in a rather irascible tone of voice.

"No, Goddammit," Traquair said, almost in a whisper. "I'll be damned if I'll give in now." He rose from behind his desk and, wobbling a bit, carried the yellow pill the length of the carpeted room to a unit expressly designed for the disposal of documents which could not be entrusted to a wastebasket. There was a whirring sound, and the Gift of Love was reduced to ashes.

Brother Lovely heaved a sigh of sadness and took his hand from out his robe, and within the instant Traquair was possessed again of his customary calm.

"For a while, Brother Traquair, I really did think you were on the brink, as you put it, of believing."

Traquair looked at the missionary curiously. *Fatuous, offensive, effeminate*, he thought,—*he's all of those things, but you've got to hand it to him—he's got charisma.*

"I don't believe in believing," Traquair replied curtly.

"Really? But you can see the evidences for belief on every hand. The Gift of Love has never failed to work."

"Oh, I'm sure it would have its usual effect, even on me. What I don't believe in is the spiritual value of any experience that a pill can produce."

"All spiritual experience has a basis in physical fact, Brother Traquair. I can cite a hundred examples——"

"And each of them will prove my point. For instance, the continued repetition of prayer, as when a litany is recited, is known to cause a reduction of the oxygen level in the blood, rendering the mind extremely suggestible. There are any number of drugs, more or less lethal, that can produce, in certain people, a state of extreme well-being——"

"Call it beatitude, Brother Traquair."

"Or call it intoxication, Brother Lovely. I've been intoxicated myself, upon occasion, and I know that there's a moment at the peak of a good drunk when the whole universe is singing a love song to you. I also know that when you're sober the singing stops."

"One ceases to hear it; that's true. If you'll accept the Gift of Love, that singing will always be audible. And much more distinct, I should venture to say."

"I have no idea to be drunk the rest of my life. Your Gift of Love is nothing more nor less than a kind of mental auto-eroticism—a permanent short-circuiting of intellectual wires. Morally, I think it is the equivalent of direct electrical stimulation of the brain's pleasure centres. It works, of course, but if that's the essence of spirituality, I'll be a materialist, thank you."

"It is not just *my* Gift of Love that you're speaking of, Brother. If I understand you, you're opposed to mysticism as such."

"In principle, yes. In practice, the only problems have arisen from those who want to get their mystical kicks the quick way—through drugs. As far as I'm concerned, *Brother*, you're just the ultimate pusher."

"You mean to say that you believe there is no objective reality behind the experience of Love, that it is no more

than a fantasy that the mind spins around itself for its own pleasure?"

"That's what I mean to say."

"Ah, but the Universal Love *is* an objective reality. It permeates the universe as factually as gravity or electromagnetic waves. The Ground of All Being from which that Love issues is as real and *tangible*, Brother Traquair, as the spaceship on which I crossed the abyss of space and which is presently orbiting above our heads. You can't see it, because the sun presently is blotting it out, but would you therefore deny that it exists?"

"I might deny that it is over our heads. For all you know, it could be above Australia now."

Brother Lovely ventured a smug, enigmatic smile. "No. I know it's over our heads. I have a definite intuition of the fact. If you like you may consult your radar experts."

Traquair squinted at the missionary's face, which glowed with a steady, lambent light. The Secretary-General had begun to form a nasty suspicion, but one which he dared not let the alien glimpse. "We are both wasting our time in such a discussion," he said abruptly, turning his back on Lovely. "Our metaphysics are incompatible, and to end up arguing about the supposed position of an object in space is the height of the absurd."

"My answer to your extravagant request is quite definitely *no*. Earth has no more intention of disarming now than it has of conquering the civilizations of the stars, which are evidently superior to ours technically, in any case. Our weaponry is purely defensive, and in evidence of this you may justly demand and we shall promise that we shall not extend our defences beyond the natural limits of our own solar system. When the time comes for us to visit your worlds, we shall come to you in peace, and of our sincerity in this we can satisfy you with any reasonable proof."

"Except that which we demand."

"You demand the impossible."

Though Traquair had seen Brother Lovely's smile on a hundred broadcasts and in newspapers, he had never heard him laugh. He laughed now. It was not especially pleasant.

"We shall see what we shall see," said Brother Luster Lovely.

"I'm sure we shall."

"Perhaps you are not aware that I have been offering you an ultimatum?"

"Ultimatum or request, my answer must be the same."

"Oh, you are so wrong, Brother Traquair. So very wrong, and so very much alone. You do not know it yet, but you have already lost the world you speak for. I have only to pronounce against you, and the little shreds of power still clinging to you will vanish like dry leaves in a gale. I had hoped to spare you that unpleasantness, but you force me to exert myself. Reluctantly, Brother Traquair, I will humble you. It will take me no more than a week. At the end of that time I shall return to this room. Perhaps when you have been humbled, you will be more willing to accept the Gift of Love."

Brother Lovely left in a flurry of indignant silk. Traquair waited until he had heard the door of the outer office closing, then picked up the receiver of his private line (to which young Dalwood had no extension) and dialled the office of General Shen Te Lung, commander of the U.N. Security Forces.

"General, I need to know as soon as possible whether within the last ten minutes Brother Luser Lovely's spaceship has been in orbit above this hemisphere. Also I must know if there has been any correlation, and how close, between Brother Lovely's personal appearances in public and the simultaneous presence of his ship above that hemisphere. Obtain accurate schedules of both sequences and bring them to my office. And by all that's Top Secret, don't let your right hand know what your left hand is doing. If there is such a correlation, I don't want it generally known."

When this piece of business had been concluded, Traquair buzzed for Dalwood. Though that young man had served him well for two years, Traquair had no compunctions about sending him packing. But Dalwood didn't answer. Traquair went to the outer office. Dalwood's desk had been cleared of everything but its memopad, upon which, neatly noted down on the page for the 17th of

December was the simple message: *You can't fire me. I quit.*

t h r e e

EACH SUCCEEDING DAY thereafter contributed its further small indignity, its little betrayal, all presumably directed towards Traquair's humbling. The hardest to bear had come on Saturday morning, when he had found poorly spelled note from Lenny, informing him that he was running away from home and would not return until his father had accepted the gift of Love. It was hard to believe that Brother Lovely could devise, as quickly as this, so thorough-going a conspiracy.

The police were of no help; indeed, there were scarcely any to be found. Traquair went to his son's school and got a list of his class mates. He spent the rest of the weekend driving around to their homes, asking after Lenny. The other parents were sympathetic and reassuring, but none of them knew anything of the boy's disappearance. "They all do it at that age. He'll be back, just wait and see."

All the families he visited were converts. He hadn't realized that Lovely had made such deep inroads into the upper classes. He had thought Pauline an exception. Invariably when he left they offered him one of the damned yellow pills.

The bad news that Monday evening brought came almost as a relief, since it was impersonal bad news, the kind with which he was more used to dealing. On prime television time Brother Luster Lovely made his stirring "Appeal to Humanity" address over the Telstar system. It was essentially the same appeal he had addressed privately to Traquair, though somewhat more fulsomely rhetorical. To this he had added an extensive (and oh, very loving) passage denouncing the Secretary-General, who, it seemed, wished to lead mankind once more into the criminal folly of war.

War! The morning newspapers were unanimous in seconding Brother Lovely's Appeal and even more vehement in denouncing Traquair—the Last Warmonger, as he was called. You couldn't really blame the newspapers: there

was so little left for them to denounce that they had to make the best of what they could get.

Specifically, the Appeal to Humanity had called for a march against the military bases of the U.N. and its member nations. All civilians were urged to congregate at specified locations near to major military installations, and at noon Wednesday to advance on these camps and overrun them, urging the soldiery to "beat their swords into ploughshares," or, at least, to lay them down. Traquair was an old hand at dealing with marchers. Any government official who had gotten through the Sixties and Seventies had had to be. But though he could regard the marches with equanimity, the promised overrunning of certain installations could not be tolerated for security reasons. Traquair notified the press which these were and warned that anyone approaching beyond prescribed limits would be fired upon. Anything less than bullets would only excite a non-violent crowd's appetite for martyrdom.

Brother Lovely announced no change in his plans. Indeed, he promised personally to lead the march against Cape Kennedy, where, obviously, security had to be tightest. Traquair, in constant telephone communication with the Security Force officers at the Cape, watched the march on television. The great mass of the crowd stopped at the wire, while Brother Lovely, scarcely luminescent at all in the Florida sunlight, marched forward hand-in-hand with two children, a boy on his right, a girl on his left.

The boy was Lenny.

Traquair withdrew the order to fire (as he probably would have in any case). As soon as Brother Lovely and the two children had passed through the gate, the great crowd surged forward. Traquair ordered that Lovely be arrested on a kidnapping charge and that his son be taken into custody and returned on the next jet to New York, but there was no one to carry out these orders. The soldiers guarding the rocket base—all but the highest officers—had thrown down their arms and joined the mob.

On the afternoon of the 23rd General Shen Te Lung came to Traquair's office. It had been established conclusively that there was a one-to-one correspondence be-

tween the public appearances of Brother Lovely and the presence overhead of the missionary's orbiting ship. On Friday Traquair had directed that all communications to and from the U.N. moonbase be cleared by himself personally, thereby preventing the base personnel from receiving Brother Lovely's Appeal of Monday evening. On Tuesday he had ordered the full arsenal of the moonbase to be trained on the orbiting spaceship, and on that target they were still fixed three days later. Shen Te Lung had acted as Traquair's intermediary in these proceedings and was therefore, besides Traquair, the only human fully aware of the limits of Lovely's much-publicized success in making the lions lie down with the lambs. And it was on this account that he had come to speak to him:

"Because, you see, I have decided to become a convert. In my earliest youth I had wished to enter the monastery of the master Shoji, but my family and the war prevented this. I have known, though only once, that perfect joy that the alien speaks of as the Gift of Love. The desire to experience such happiness again has conquered me."

"I appreciate your sentiments, General, but if you will—delay your decision just one more day. If only for my sake."

"I have delayed these many months for your sake, Sir. I approach you today only because of my uncertainty. The missiles trained on the alien's ship—"

"Please, General . . . that question is best left in my hands."

"Mr. Traquair, I *must* know if you intend to use those bombs. You have not, as I have, seen the effects of such weapons upon their victims. My parents lived in Hiroshima. My whole career as commander of the Security Forces has had as its object that those weapons never be used again."

"They will not destroy any living creature, General, only machinery."

"I have told this to myself, but my conscience will not be satisfied. It is a point of honour. If you can give me some guarantee . . ."

"I'm sorry. I cannot."

"In that, Secretary Traquair, in that case . . ."

"Yes?" asked Traquair, reaching unobtrusively into the desk drawer in which he kept a Smith & Wesson .38. "In that case?"

"In conflicts between love and duty, the Japanese have developed a unique and highly satisfactory custom." The General extended his hand. "Good-bye, Seneca."

"Good-bye, General."

The neatly disembowelled body of the commanding officer of the Security Forces was found in a washroom on the 24th floor of the U.N. Secretariat half an hour later.

f o u r

"DEAR, DEAR BROTHER Traquair!"

"Brother Lovely—at last."

The missionary came forward swiftly as though to embrace Traquair, but contented himself with the handshake that Traquair allowed. "Have you been waiting long for me?"

"All week, Brother, all week. Your followers outside have been waiting too—not for so long, but I suspect with more impatience, since it's cold out there today. For my own part I didn't expect you till four or after. It would have been inconsistent with your policy toward me."

Brother Lovely smiled disbelievingly. "It has been a trying week for us both," he stated in a level tone.

"Yes, but there was always your promise that it would end with us together again, and that has made my trials easier to bear."

"But, Brother Traquair, they would not have had to be borne at all if that were your attitude! You cannot imagine the pain it has cost *me* to administer these little reproofs. Conflicts appal me, even those in which I engage in a spirit of Love and Brotherliness. How much happier I would have been to allow the glory of the disarmament to have been yours, as it should have been! Now, I am afraid, that distinction cannot be restored to you, though the official recognition of the *fait accompli* is still wanting. Yes—and one thing else is wanting: *you*, Brother Traquair. There shall be more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety nine just persons, which need no repent-

ance." Brother Lovely shed a benign radiance over the room, as once more he handed Traquair the little yellow Gift of Love.

Traquair pressed a button beside his desk, activating a tape-recorded command to the moonbase staff. Within the minute other buttons of graver consequence had been pressed, and the last remaining missiles of the U.N. Security Forces began speeding toward Brother Luster Lovely's orbiting ship.

"You do not, quite, undertake my meaning," Traquair said, brushing the pill aside. "As you have observed, I could have made my surrender at any time. In fact, Brother, I have been awaiting my triumph."

"Yes, of course, it is a great triumph of the spirit."

"No, Brother, my triumph over *you*."

The room grew dimmer. "Ah. I had thought I had converted you." He sighed.

"In a sense you have. You have convinced me, at least, of something I had denied last week—that the Universal Love is an objective reality. I feel I even know where it is objectified."

"Really? How interesting." Then, rather sharply: "Where?"

"Formerly," Traquair said, adopting Brother Lovely's characteristic tone of leisurely disquisition, "it maintained at least temporary residences in Delphi, Palestine, and perhaps Lourdes, where faith once worked its miracles and the prophets prophesied. Then, I suspect, it was a very weak and impermanent field of force and that the minds of men, except in rare instances, were not well-attuned to it. I do not pretend to understand its ultimate nature any more than I understand the ultimate nature of gravitation or light. I've read a little in the mystics—John of the Cross, Eckhart, some Zen masters—and candidly they leave me cold. In any case I don't believe they apply any more. They were concerned mostly with the techniques of attaining a visionary state. Now mysticism has been simplified by the Gift of Love. There is no longer any difficulty in apprehending the Ground of All Being, the Universal Love, the Holy What-have-you. Whatever was blocking the doors of perception in our minds has been removed."

"To allow Love to enter freely. Exactly, my dear Brother."

"And it enters from your ship."

"Oh goodness," Brother Lovely fretted, "you've guessed. But perhaps you had better tell me *exactly* what you've guessed."

"I've established that all your successful missionary efforts have been made while your ship is overhead in the same hemisphere as yourself, and that all your globe-trotting has kept you within working range of it almost constantly. Which leads me to suspect that you'd be rather powerless without its assistance."

A red light lit up on Traquair's phone panel.

"And, in fact, Brother Lovely, that you are powerless now."

"Really, this sort of psychological warfare may be effective when you're dealing with diplomats and such, but for my own part——"

"You're mistaken, Brother Lovely. This was good old-fashioned hydrogen-bomb warfare. Your ship has just been demolished."

Brother Lovely lifted one eyebrow to express his surprise. "Actually?"

Now who's using psychological warfare? Traquair thought.

"It should be easy enough for you to find out. I assume you keep in some sort of radio contact with it."

Brother Lovely brushed aside the folds of his robe and diddled with the dials of the control box strapped to his waist. At last he glanced up at Traquair. "Whyever did you do that?" he asked. He did not seem adequately upset.

"To destroy the power source you were drawing on—whatever it was. To put a stop to your medicine show."

Brother Lovely smiled commiseratingly—as much as to say—*Forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

"But I don't *feel* stopped, Brother Traquair. Far, far from it. There's more Love in this world than your bombs can destroy. Violence is never a wise policy."

"Under most circumstances, I agree. But really what choice have you left me, Brother Lovely, except violence?"

Traquair asked, while reaching into his top right hand desk drawer.

Traquair aimed at the alien's head, but his first bullet only grazed Lovely's throat, whence a little stream of glowing blood trickled on to his yellow robe. The second bullet penetrated near the heart, and the third a few inches lower. With each shot, Brother Lovely staggered back towards the low chair at the end of the room, into which he collapsed.

Traquair had never had to use a weapon before in his diplomatic work, and, though he had often given orders resulting in violence, he had never been, so proximately, the cause of death. His immediate reaction, after putting away the revolver, was an impulse to phone for a doctor.

The nimbus of glory that had enveloped the alien was beginning to grow dim, and he was making unhappy sounds deep in his throat.

"I'm sorry," Traquair said, politely. He was chiefly sorry that he had not, one year ago, listened to the Soviet delegate's advice on dealing with the alien, which had been simply to destroy both the missionary and the ship upon arrival. He had been horrified at the proposal and dismissed the delegate from his office with such a wealth of high-minded vituperation that the man had never been back to see him again. It had been a mistake, but one which seemed now to be remedied.

Brother Lovely was trying to say something. Traquair approached and knelt down beside him. A fragile luminescence pulsed erratically beneath the alien's smooth skin, like the flickering of a neon fixture in its last moments. "You have made a mistake," the dying creature whispered.

"Perhaps," Traquair admitted, though he did not really think so.

Brother Lovely smiled faintly. "Oh, not *that*, not killing me, that's nothing. I'm nobody. You've missed the point entirely."

"What is the point?" Traquair asked.

"*He that cometh after me is mightier than I,*" said the missionary. With which words the feeble pulse of light was extinguished, and Brother Luster Lovely lay dark and dead.

Only then did Seneca Traquair realize that he had murdered not the Lord but merely one who had been pre-

paring His way, not the Messiah but the Baptist. He returned to his desk and sat down and tried to think, but he couldn't think, it was impossible to think. He could only stare at the blank page of the calendar-memopad for the 24th of December.

five

IT—THE INVASION proper—came upon a midnight clear. Loosely speaking. In New York it was only 5 p.m. on the afternoon of December 24th, but it was midnight in the state of Israel.

They landed everywhere at the same time, in thousands of little ferries similar to that which Brother Lovely had utilized a year before. They had departed from the main ship at 3:30 p.m., New York time, immediately upon receiving Brother Lovely's go-ahead.

As soon as the doors of their ships were opened you could feel the force of their Love. It was like standing at the foot of Niagara. The little fraction of that Love which Brother Lovely had drawn off for his missionary labours across a distance of half-a-million miles could not have prepared his converts for the sheer immensity of this. From the moment the invaders landed, the converts ceased to have wills of their own, minds of their own, lives of their own. They were absorbed in the Ground of All Being and obeyed the Universal Will.

For Traquair, who had never taken one of the yellow pills, it did not take hold with the same force so immediately. He had a moment to appreciate their strategy and to regret not having released the missiles a week, a day, an hour earlier than he had.

For their ships were weaponless. Why should they bother to build weapons, after all, when it was so much easier to make their enemies disarm? *Enemies? Are we their enemies?* he wondered.

He began to cry because of what he had done to Brother Lovely. Why, Brother Lovely had not been his enemy! He had only been obeying that same ineffable impulse which Traquair could feel already bending his own will. They *had*

been brothers, Brother Lovely and Brother Traquair, for they were both sons of the same heavenly father.

He seemed to hear a voice from his childhood, a gruff voice, reading to him: *Love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest; for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.* It was his own Father's voice, and it was so real that for a moment he thought he could also reach up and touch his Father's bushy beard. He was his Father's son again, and he felt his own will and self drifting away as on a breeze while his Father began to tell him what to do.

He loved his Father and did what he was told.

Within an hour all the delegates to the Security Council had been assembled. It was an important occasion, for it was the last gathering of its kind on Earth, which henceforth would be governed from other seats of council. The doors at the back of the hushed auditorium were opened, and Seneca Traquair, overcome with Love, rushed down the aisle of the Security Council to embrace the Divine Being, so mighty and so beautiful, so very lovely, who Himself scuttled forward on his eight spider's legs, eager to welcome humanity into the Universal Brotherhood.

YOU NEED THE BSFA

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THE WORK OF PHILIP K. DICK



John Brunner

THE MOST CONSISTENTLY brilliant sf writer in the world, author of over a score of excellent novels (including a Hugo winner) and more good short stories than I can count, is a man whose books the average reader of *NEW WORLDS* has probably never seen unless in their scantily-imported American editions. Something, I hear, is likely to be done in the near future to rectify this appalling neglect, but over the past few years I've become sadly accustomed to raising his name at the Globe, where the London Circle holds its monthly meetings, and finding that the person I was talking to had read only the odd few magazine stories by him.

Right. Let's get a couple of hard facts down on paper. The name is Philip K. Dick. Philip K. Dick is more brilliant more often in more of the books he writes than any other six writers in contemporary sf put together. And in case I'm still leaving room for misunderstanding: Philip K. Dick is so good, just thinking about it sends shivers down my spine.

Trying to explain a subjective preference, like mine for Dick's work, is next to impossible; the sensible thing to do now I've declared my appreciation is to send you all out to buy his entire published output and sit down and read it. Unfortunately, as far as I can determine, only three of his books (not including the Hugo winner) have been published here, and of these I can only find one currently in print. While waiting for this to be set right, therefore, I'll attempt to analyse the strength of Dick's talent.

First, and most important, as a craftsman he is to be compared with the very best writers currently working in

the English language. Under this head I'd subsume such necessary abilities as the structuring of plots and subplots, the description of environments, and the creation of convincing dialogue which properly corresponds to the character of the person uttering it. In some senses, one might even say he's ahead of his competitors in other fields, for while it requires primarily a faculty of observation to conjure up in fiction the modern American scene, for instance, to do the same in sf with the same degree of vividness calls for an imagination as detailed as most people's ordinary external senses.

And this is his second great gift: an almost hallucinatory sharpness of detail in whatever non-real world he cares to create. One of the worst faults exhibited in the general run of sf is a lack of consistency in a scheme of extrapolations into the future. Dick is not immune from this—no writer is—yet omissions and inconsistencies, if they occur in his work, don't jar while you're actually reading the book; at most they show up when you think back afterwards and start to ask the awkward questions. While the book is open before you, however, the mind is too gripped for such disturbances to intrude.

The third remarkable quality of his work is paradoxical in its nature: he is able to revert again and again and *again* to a theme which cropped up in an earlier book and which he felt was not exhausted by the treatment previously accorded it, and prove he was right to think so. He can strike more sparks from an idea he's used in six books already than most of us can from a notion we've never encountered before.

These themes form a kind of pattern, which is orchestrated through his novels—this I can't compare to anything in literature, but find I must parallel with a musical image: the way a jazzman can keep coming home to the blues for fifty years of his playing career and still have as much fresh material to work on as he did when he started.

What are these recurrent themes? Well, there are so many of them that I have room to cite only the most conspicuous. The empty world; the use of power; illusion substituting for reality; the malleability of externals under

the influence of psychosis or drugs; the conflict between chance and determinism. (And separating these is ultimately futile!)

What I'm nicknaming "the empty world" is a situation in which the people who matter are reduced to a mere handful: a device which he exploits further than most people would dare to carry it. In early novels like *The World Jones Made* and *Eye in the Sky* he employs it rather conventionally: Jones is a man part of whose awareness exists a year into the future, who has achieved world domination by this talent and organised "people who matter" into a group centred on himself, while the alternate worlds of *Eye* are successively centred on a single individual's imagination and preferences. Likewise, in *Vulcan's Hammer*, the administrators of Earth form a tight, enclosed circle on whom outsiders impinge randomly.

In later novels, the world is emptied in a more literal sense. The Mars of *Martian Time Slip* consists of a small California town transplanted to the Australian outback, in the strict analysis; the protagonist is important because he's a handyman and handymen are rare, and the book's action is dominated by the chairman of the Plumbers' Union, Martian Local. Even more literally emptied is the Earth of two other novels: in *The Game Players of Titan* a sterility-inducing weapon has depopulated the planet to the point where there is room for only *one* rare-record store, and in *The Penultimate Truth* a handful of cynical survivors after nuclear war have decided to leave the majority of their fellows underground in "tanks" where they are fed with phoney propaganda to convince them the fighting is still going on. The Bondsmen in *Titan* hold title to whole chunks of the Earth's surface on a kind of villeinage basis, while the super-admen of *Truth* have to stake out their own demesnes with robot labour, taking as much radioactive land as they can hold against their rivals.

The use of power shows a similar development throughout the sequence of Dick's novels. The underlying concept seems to be that of seizing one's chance through determination and alertness, however, rather than—for example—Heinlein's assumption that conventional political and committee tactics are incapable of improvement. Apart from

The World Jones Made, Dick has concerned himself with total world power in only one of his novels: *World of Chance*, which is based on the "minimax" strategy evolved in theory of games as the optimum course for the average player to follow. Here he has a world organised on the basis of one of his favourite ideas, the workings of chance, but systematised by the semi-feudal method of committing people's power cards—i.e. lottery tickets in the world-wide draw for dictatorial office—to the leaders of groups called Hills (for ant-hills, I assume) who thereby increase their own chance of achieving the top post.

Later, the exercise of power becomes more and more remote, climaxing in the deliberate lies by which the lords of Earth in *Penultimate Truth* protect themselves against the vengeance of the deluded millions cowering underground.

Illusions substituting for reality crop up in virtually every book Dick has written. He is—one must say this—obsessed with the idea that a human being might be manipulated by unseen forces, and consequently exploits the ultra-humanoid robot both literally and symbolically. Part of the protagonist's job in *World of Chance* is to control a robot on its way to assassinate the current world dictator; in *Clans of the Alphane Moon* (no ordinary clans, those, but descendants of an isolated community of lunatics whose behaviour exhibits a socialised extension of the classic divisions of mental disorder!) an expedition to the stars is supervised secretly by remote-controlled humanoids, and in *The Simulacra* almost nothing is what it appears to be. The delusions suffered by the psychokinetic musician Richard Kongrosian are among the finest examples of mental illness I know in fiction.

But *Time out of Joint* is the novel most explicitly linked to hallucination; its central character, Ragle Gumm, has retreated to an imaginary past time (our present), and the action revolves around the gradual dissipation of the clues and symbols with which he has been encouraged to support the fugue.

The malleability of the external world—the willingness of human beings to accept not a hypothetical "reality" in

the Kantian sense of *das Ding an sich* but a construct elaborated from the impact of preconceptions on the curious chemical stew we keep inside our crania—is perhaps the most personal element in Dick's writing. Ragle Gumm, while retreating to a non-existent private world, is at the same time preserving his sanity; the tankers of *The Penultimate Truth* would rather accept the propaganda from the surface despite the blatant errors of historical fact which it contains than take the trouble to go look for themselves and see what the outer world is really like; the adoring TV audience in *The Simulacra* almost worship the First Lady—a kind of Jackie Kennedy to the Nth degree—and ignore the absurdity of her eternal youth for the sake of hoping that they, one day, may be invited to appear at the White House even if only to play arrangements of classical music for jug-blowing duet.

Combined with and making a sharp contrast to this notion of malleable externals is the converse of it. Whereas the dénouement of *Game Players of Titan*—in which a team from Earth is forced to play a Titanian game against creatures which can exercise virtually every psi power including that of extra-temporal perception—hinges on the ability of drugs to interfere with psionic talents, thus returning the game to the domain of randomness, Jones, in the world he made, goes mad when he proves unable to elude the certainty in twelve months' time of his own death.

This uneasy, undecided wavering between the acceptance of reality as fixed and the conviction that it's an illusion bred of subjective assumptions finds explicit formulation in some of the latest novels. I've already outlined *World of Chance* an early attack on this theme, but the super-Monopoly game played for the title-deeds to cities and actual feudal rulership over them in *Game Players* takes it probably as far as it can be taken in the classical context of games with winners and losers. However, as you might guess with Dick, he doesn't stop *there*! He pushes it further yet in two much subtler directions.

In an early novel, *The Man Who Japed*, he first broached one of the related questions developed from the two foregoing key concepts: the malleability of reality and the operations of chance. In essence, he was noting the fact

that for most human beings our conception of the external world is not private—it's conditioned, perhaps even *imposed*, by conformity with our neighbours' prejudices. In the present-day world this tends to be discernible chiefly on a superficial level: if one lives in a prosperous district, for instance, one will tend to take the complexion of one's political opinions from those who live nearby. At one masterly blow, Dick carried this through to another level. By assuming a world-wide ideology which eliminated the range of choice open to us in a more liberal society, he transferred this group-imposed view of reality to the physical rather than the subjective. (A more sophisticated treatment of the same idea occurs in *The Simulacra*, by the way, with its "relpol" tests.)

And almost at right angles to this situation, in which the protagonist can only express his private view of the nature of the world and man's place in it by—so to say—blaspheming against the revered founder of the common ideology (in a hilarious sequence where he attributes cannibalism to him in a TV programme), is the one in which it's taken for granted that the world itself, our lives, and indeed the universe, are manifestations of a randomly fluctuating, plastic substratum on which we human beings by our decisions and perceptions impose a form meaningful primarily to ourselves alone.

I'm now talking about the book which won Dick his Hugo: *The Man in the High Castle*. It is, incontestably, his best novel to date, although the very recent *Dr. Blood-money or How we Got Along After the Bomb* similarly exhibits his talents in full flight. I'd give *Castle* the edge for two reasons, nonetheless.

First, for the thoroughness with which he has elaborated the decorative detail over his ingenious basic structure—a United States, defeated in World War II, which has been partitioned three ways, with the Atlantic and Pacific sea-boards respectively occupied by the Germans and Japanese and a rump state forming a buffer zone between the two spheres of influence.

Second, for the absolute originality of the underlying assumption, which is not the rather commonplace "Nazis won World War II" gimmick of Giles Cooper's *The Other*

Man or Kornbluth's *Two Dooms*, cleverly though the latter was argued. It's something which probably only Dick would have dared to tackle and certainly only Dick would have brought off with such magnificent aplomb.

You're probably not familiar with the *I Ching*, or Book of Changes, unless (a) you've read *Man in the High Castle* or (b) you've read Hesse's *Magister Ludi* (*Das Glasperlenspiel*) or (c) you're a student of the oriental or the occult. This is a shame. It's one of the great creative works of the human imagination: the classical Chinese oracle, consulted by a complicated system of drawing long and short yarrow-sticks or—more simply—by tossing a series of three coins. An inquiry to it yields a six-line poem, of which one or more may be "moving lines"; interpretation of this poem in accordance with the classic commentary furnishes a prediction.

Under the influence of the Japanese, people in Dick's occupied America have come to consult this oracle. The action of *High Castle* develops around the quest of a number of the main characters for the author of a book set in a world where the Allies were not defeated (i.e. one corresponding to our own), and when located the author declares that he didn't write the book himself—he plotted it entirely by consulting the *I Ching*. In other words, the Book of Changes itself wished to inform the world that this sour defeat was not reality—that elsewhere there was a truer world in which all had turned out for the best.

High Castle represents the climax of so many interlocking themes in Dick's total work that here I can only point out one especially significant factor, which again is paradoxical: he represents his characters as being the product not just of a human imagination, but of the system of intangible forces for which the *I Ching* forms a nexus analogous to the pole of a magnet . . . yet seldom in any work of fiction, and almost never in sf, will you come across characters who are more deeply felt and more effectively portrayed.

I have no space to reprint examples of Dick's technique: the way in which he presents subsidiary characters so that they leap alive off the page; the way he creates obsessive,

almost paranoid terror when the action calls for it; the way he ties his plot-lines into knots by time-travel devices and then meticulously untangles every last thread again; the way he drives barbed spears of humour into our smug self-satisfaction to underline the relevance of his imaginings to our own contemporary existence. I can only say, urgently and often, that if you want to witness a master of sf ringing changes the rest of us have never dreamed of on the most fundamental themes and symbols of the genre, go and read any book by Philip K. Dick.

Better still, go and read *all* of them.

Novels by Philip K. Dick

Now Wait For Last Year (forthcoming in U.K.)

The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch (Cape, 21s.)

Clans of the Alphane Moon (forthcoming in U.K.)

The Cosmic Puppets (Ace)

Dr. Futurity (Ace)

Eye in the Sky (Ace)

The Game Players of Titan (Ace)

A Handful of Darkness (Panther, U.K. 3s. 6d.)

The Man in the High Castle (Forthcoming in U.K.)

The Man Who Japed (Ace)

Martian Time Slip (Ace)

Solar Lottery (Ace)

Time Out of Joint (Serial in NEW WORLDS, U.K.)

Time Pawn (?)

The Variable Man and Other Stories (Ace)

Vulcan's Hammer (forthcoming in U.K.)

The Zap Gun (?)

The Penultimate Truth (Belmont)

The Simulacra (forthcoming in U.K.)

World of Chance (Panther, U.K. O/P)

Dr. Bloodmoney (forthcoming in U.K.)

Cantata 140 (?)

The Crack In Space (Ace)

(?)—Publisher not certain at time of writing.

CLIMATE INCLEMENT

THREE APPROACHES TO the theme of planetary exploration are demonstrated by current SF novels. In *Close to Critical* (Gollancz, 16/-) Hal Clement portrays an alien world with that eye for detail that marks him as a master of science-fiction. Like his earlier *Mission of Gravity*, this is an account of Man surveying an environment hostile beyond his endurance. Tenebra, circling the star Altair, sixteen lightyears from Earth, is a planet of crushing gravity with an atmosphere in which house-sized raindrops fall nightly, and a geography that fluctuates with lethal rapidity. Only by parachuting a tracked robot into this watery hell can the orbiting scientists contact the natives and recruit them as an exploration team. The action that follows, however, does not always match the fascination of the setting. Several groups are involved—human and alien scientists; two opposed tribes of natives; a human girl and an alien child stranded on the planet's surface in a spaceship—and the division of interest tends to weaken reader identification. No character achieves the stature of Barlennan, the tough Mesklinite of *Mission of Gravity*; instead, Tenebra itself emerges as the dominant figure. As depicted by Clement, most readers may consider it a more than adequate substitute.

More colourful but scarcely less dangerous is the planet Pelorus, in John Rankine's *Interstellar Two Five* (Dennis Dobson, 18/-). When the ship of the title crashes on Pelorus, two choices face her crew. One, to survive, settle and colonize. Two, to transport their ship four thousand miles to a plateau from which it may be possible to make a successful take-off. How they set about the latter task and face opposition both physical and mental in doing so, makes a continuously exciting story. The manlike warriors, the luxuriant jungles and monstrous carnivores, the weird grid of ESP forces that encloses Pelorus, are painted with sure strokes in bold colours. This is adventure, lightened by humour and unburdened by Significance, well suited to counterbalance the more esoteric trends in contemporary sf.

Approach Three is more in the nature of a retreat in the

general direction of the Gernsback era. *Trivana I*, by R. Cox Abel and Chas. Barren (Panther SF, 3/6) is an account of a voyage to Venus which bristles with technical and sociological detail. The picture of Earth at an unspecified future date, divided into regions containing over four thousand million people *each*, ought to be terrifying; the journey to and landing on Venus ought to be thrilling. Neither succeeds. R. Cox Abel is described as an ex-member of the Hawker Siddeley VTO design team, and it appears that his enthusiasm for the mechanics of space-flight has been the driving force behind the story, with a consequent loss of dramatic balance. A defter touch in blending the emotional and the scientific is required for the role of a Space Shuttle.

From Compact SF at 3/6 comes *The Symmetrians*, an ingenious novel set in a post-Disaster world where symmetry is enforced and religious rituals are based on the patterns of thermonuclear reactions. Also from Compact, *The Deep Fix* is a collection of stories by James Colvin, chiefly concerned with the conflict between the outer world and the inner reality of the mind. Of the six, the title story most skilfully handles the theme, although readers familiar with the symbolism involved may find themselves a step ahead of the central character.

Edited by John Carnell, *New Writings in SF 8* (Dennis Dobson, 16/-) also offers six stories, on a variety of subjects. In Colin Kapp's *The Pen and the Dark*, scientists wrestle with a literally chilling problem in alien technology. But did they attempt to explode that nuclear device above an inhabited planet? The guardian of an interstellar ship discovers the loneliness of immortality in Gerald W. Page's *Spacemen Live Forever*, while the leader of a Master Race achieves immortality of a kind in the savagely humorous *The Final Solution*, by R. W. Mackelworth. John Rackham sees danger in dreams even for a *Computer's Mate*, John Baxter produces probably his best story to date in the dreamlike *Tryst*, and Keith Roberts presents the unique emotional problem of Mr. Davenport, who discovered that even in a world of sophisticated cybernetics, your *Synth* will find you out.

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ON SALE SEPTEMBER 28

WHEN IT'S TIME TO PUT ON THE BUCKSKINS A MAN KNOWS WHAT HE HAS TO DO . . .

NIGHT OF LIGHT by Philip Jose Farmer (Berkeley, 50 cents) is a powerful novel, full of ideas, which it would be a pity to miss. John Carmody, outlawed from Earth for wife-murder, is on the planet Dante's Joy. He decides to stay awake during the long Night, a period when the planet's inhabitants either sleep, or run the risk of seeing their own nightmares come to life and their bodies change to answer their deepest conceptions of themselves. All this is linked with the religion of the planet, which is presided over by the incarnations of two brother gods, Yess, the virtuous, (an inspired name) and Algul, the evil. Carmody decides, out of pure perversity, to kill Yess. The atmosphere of the long night is almost tangible, a mixture of nightmare and the worst parts of real life. Carmody's encounter with the gods is well handled in terms of his own character. The second half of the book, where Carmody appears as a Catholic priest, is weaker, giving the impression that the impulse for the original had gone. The plot is more mechanical, the author sees his planet more as a curious place than, as in the first half, a real, valid world, and Carmody becomes the good guy come to sort out a foul-up among the aliens. Nevertheless *Night of Light* is an achievement, in sf terms.

Brian Aldiss's *Bow Down to Nul* (Ace, 40 cents) concerns an Earth misruled by the corrupt official of a vast, but declining non-human empire, the Nuls. Finally, an old official is sent to examine reports of corruption and tyranny. The problem is how to reveal the true situation to him? All falls on the shoulders of a weak and fearful spy for the Earth resistance movement, a minor official of the Nuls. His struggle between fear and altruism is well done, and good writing obscures the fact that in most respects this novel could have been set in an imaginary colony of ten years ago.

Imagination Unlimited (Mayflower, 3s. 6d.), Bleiler and

Dikty's collection of six stories by Sturgeon, Bradbury, Jameson, Rocklynne, Latham and Gallun, is an anthology to put many modern sf anthologies to shame. A lost child piece by Bradbury, a Sturgeon nightmare, an appallingly written but well-constructed story about mapping Venus by Malcolm Jameson, a comic-sinister story about a gambler by Rocklynne, a good tale by Philip Latham, at the end of which the world's light slowly fades and dies, and a brilliant story about a Martian who makes contact with Earth and dares to come here (*Old Faithful* by Gallun)—all are well worth reading. In a market choked with anthologies of pieces that should have been left to fade and crumble, this collection justifies its existence.

Henry Kuttner's *Fury* (Mayflower, 3s. 6d.) is a fast-moving planetary story—we shall not see their like again. Venus is colonised by Earthmen who live below-sea in the Deeps, having found the surface impossible to tame. Into this situation comes the son of one of the immortal ruling families of Venus, rejected by his family and not knowing his parentage. Vigorous, proletarian and daring. Sam challenges the rulers' hegemony and their backward-looking policy of staying below-sea,—and wins. The basic theme is the good old sf one of the hairy frontiersman who spits in the fire but gets more done than the dudes back East, although this social comment is damaged by the fact that Sam wins through because he is really a chip off the old aristocratic block. The tension between Sam and the family who first guard him, then try to destroy him when he challenges them holds the book together. A very good read.

The Trouble Twisters (Doubleday, \$3.95) is a collection of three neat Poul Anderson stories centred round an interplanetary trader David Fallkyn. Andre Norton's *Crossroads of Time* (Ace, 50 cents) is an alternate worlds story about tracking down a megalomaniac seeking a world to make his own. The plot is mechanical, the hero is made of cardboard.

Penguin have brought out the famous Merril-Kornbluth collaboration *Gunner Cade* (3s. 6d.), written under the name of Cyril Judd. Cade, part of the rigidly organised fighting force of a rigidly organised society, is catapulted

by accident into low life and finds that his society is weaker and more corrupt than he had been taught to think. Like a small-scale Tom Jones, he staggers from place to place, always under attack, always green, always hopeful, always trying to maintain his pitifully inappropriate standards. Comic and exciting the book well deserves its reputation. Unfortunately the mood is lost when, at the end, Cade has to put on the usual buckskins and lead his untrained horde triumphantly against the outmoded and corrupt Empire.

The cover of *Clash of Star Kings* by Avram Davison (Ace, 50 cents) tells a lie—"the night the stars fell and the spacemen rose"—for the book concerns the return of ancient gods to a Mexican village. Slight, but well-constructed, it has no more to do with sf than Bulldog Drummond. John Rackham's *Danger from Vega* (the other half of this double) concerns one Jeremy Thrope who smiles without mirth twice on two pages. He lands on a planet filled with women wearing only short leather skirts and knives. They are a slave-race to the enemy Vegans who keep them to breed and do all the dirty work. Naturally they are hostile to men, but after he has destroyed the Vegans they believe Thrope when he tells them life need not really be like that.

The Family and Marriage in Britain by Ronald Fletcher (Pelican, 5s.) is an interesting survey of family relationships in Britain, including a long section on the family from the beginning of industrialised society. Mr. Fletcher's biases are apparent. For example, he seems suspicious of romantic love, and appears to support pre-marital sexual experience, suitability tests for marriage and making divorce almost impossible for couples with children. But there are interesting quotations from documents and statistics and the fragmentary picture of the brutal conditions of working class family life in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries should be read by all who deplore the dehumanisation of man in contemporary society. The main objection is that like almost all true sociologists, almost all his references are to working class life, even though there is ample material available on, for example, the Victorian middle class family. He also ignores the importance of the size of

families—the role for example of the Victorian eldest sister, often known generically as Cissie, and always away from school to look after the other children, and the readiness of the large, unwieldy families of the past to split up like amoebae if necessary—Charles Dickens, from his honeymoon on, never had less than one of his wife's brothers or sisters living with him.

Hilary Bailey

continued from page 3

most sf magazines) attack specific targets where sf could only attack general ones. Sf is still an ideal medium for social satire, philosophical argument, prophetic warning and so on—but it is now not the only medium. What we choose to call the 'mainstream' is doing almost everything that sf was doing ten or twenty years ago—and it is doing it better than sf was doing it then! On the whole, modern sf is doing it better, too, of course—but it cannot continue to compete, cannot exert itself as a completely open and improving medium, unless it allows itself to cover all aspects of life, not simply some of them. And it is not enough for it to keep pace with the social novel (borrowing standards, in fact, from the social novel); it must develop its own standards, its own conventions, and it must take its subject matter from every possible source. Otherwise it will remain what it was until fairly recently—the fat, intelligent, often sardonic, colourfully-dressed eunuch of literature.

So, though we anticipate a certain response to some of the stories we publish in this issue, we hope that they will be accepted on their merits, on their own terms, and not regarded as 'breakthrough' stories, or 'controversial' stories, or stories written to be sensational and to shock. They are seriously intentioned and deal with subjects that the authors feel deeply about. They are trying to cope with the job of analysing and interpreting various aspects of human existence, and they hope that in the process they succeed in entertaining you.

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